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ERNEST RENAN

Recollections of My Youth

BROADWAY DIARIES
MEMOIRS AND LETTERS

BROADWAY DIARIES MEMOIRS & LETTERS

EDITED BY EILEEN POWER
AND ELIZABETH DREW

Renan's Recollections of My Youth
G. G. COULTON

Memoirs of Lorenzo da Ponte
L. A. SHEPPARD

Lewis's Journal of a West India Proprietor
MONA WILSON

Letters of George Sand
V. LUCAS AND E. DREW

Journal of a Slave-Dealer
EVELINE MARTIN

Letters of Fanny Burney
MURIEL MASEFIELD

Diary of Lady Hoby
DOROTHY MEADS

Diary of a French Gardener
FRANCIS BIRRELL

Letters of Sydney Smith
NOWELL SMITH

Essays and Letters of St. Evremond
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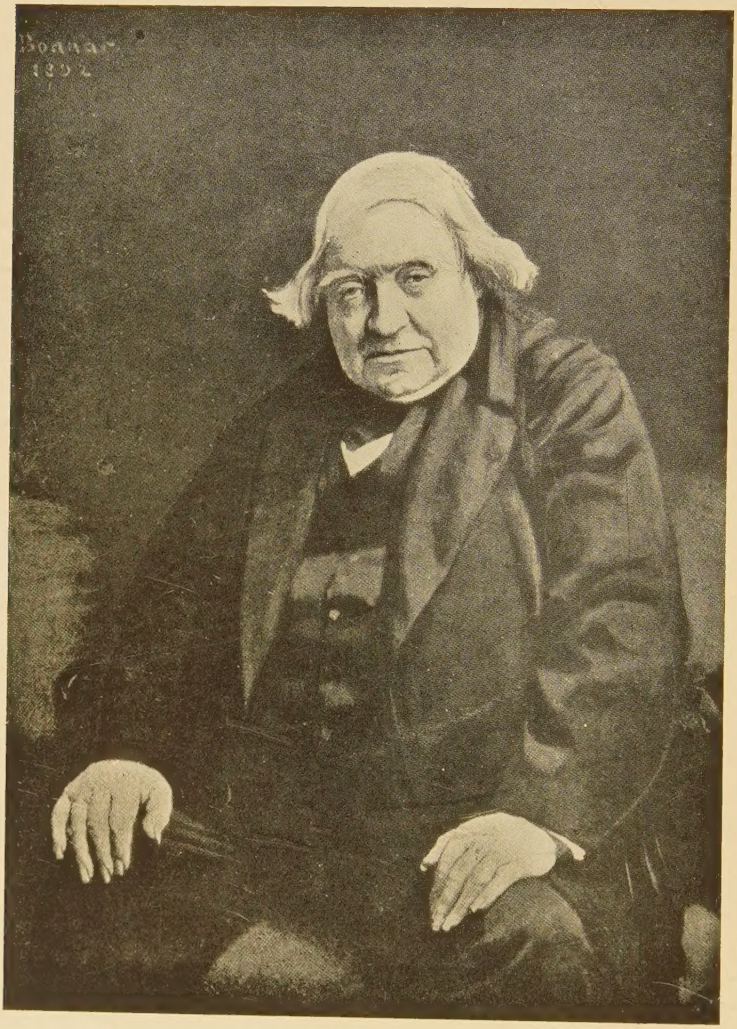

ERNEST RENAN IN 1892

(*From a painting by Bonnat*)

ERNEST RENAN

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY YOUTH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

G. G. COULTON

M.A., HON. D.LITT. (DURHAM), ETC.

WITH TWO PORTRAITS

LONDON

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INTRODUCTION

By Dr. G. G. COULTON

In 1845, on October 9, John Henry Newman left the Anglican for the Roman communion. Three days earlier a young student had walked out of the Seminary of St.-Sulpice with a very different resolve fixed for ever in his mind. His tastes and upbringing had been those of a Catholic priest; in a sense, he never ceased to regret his lost Catholicism, just as Newman regretted his lost English Bible and the *Via Media* he had once dreamed of; but, fundamentally, Renan died as irreconcilable as he shows himself in the last words of this present book. Each of these men has left an autobiography seldom surpassed or equalled for interest; each was not only a leader of thought in his own generation, but also a master of style; and all the religious struggles of the last four centuries are typified in this adhesion of the great Anglican to Rome at the very moment when this model seminarist was finding the Church of his birth frankly impossible. Let me therefore run rapidly through the main facts of Renan's career;

such a summary may be useful to the reader after, if not before, his perusal of these *Souvenirs* themselves. Certainly we of the last generation, who read the book on its first appearance in 1883, would have been very grateful for a few such definite landmarks.

Ernest Joseph Renan was born at Quimper on February 28, 1823, and died within a few weeks of the Psalmist's threescore and ten (October 2, 1892). His father, a sea captain, died early, leaving three small children to a widow who lived on until 1868, undisturbed in her old Breton faith. Like Voltaire and Victor Hugo and many others, Renan was a very weakly infant at birth. At six he went to school, and so distinguished himself by his ability, hard work, and good conduct that at fifteen he was taken up, as a young prodigy, to Dupanloup's model seminary at Paris (1838). Thence he passed into the higher seminary of Issy (October, 1841) and to St.-Sulpice at Paris. Here, however, his more advanced studies awakened doubts as to his priestly vocation; in the spring of 1845, after agonies of conflict and renunciation, he had reached comparative calm outside his early faith; in October he definitely quitted the seminary. Herein he was encouraged by his sister Henriette, a governess of the Jane Eyre type, who had independently followed the same evolution

long before him, and who now put her scanty savings at his disposal. But these were not long needed. Renan taught for a few days at the Collège Stanislas, directed by the distinguished Jesuit Gratry; but he could not bring himself to wear the clerical cassock, and therefore exchanged his post for that of pupil-teacher at a private school. Here, as he tells us in the *Souvenirs*, he had the luck to find among his pupils the future chemist Berthelot, four years younger than himself. After two years of colossal labour, Renan obtained the Prix Volney, one of the great prizes of the Institut, for a monograph on the History of the Semitic Languages. In this same year (1847), after passing the degrees of Bachelier and Licencié, he became Agrégé, or Fellow of the University, and was appointed to the Lycée of Vendôme, a post which he was soon glad to exchange for a lower place in the Lycée of Versailles. Then came the Revolution of 1848, from which he held politically aloof, but which did much to stimulate his book on *The Future of Science*. At the same time, he was working at a love-story, *Ernest and Beatrice*. The former was published only in 1890, the latter was never finished. But meanwhile the Académie des Inscriptions sent him to seek material in the Italian libraries for the *Histoire Littéraire de la France*; those eight months

brought him a revelation which he never forgot. In 1850 he settled with his sister in a little flat overlooking the garden of the Carmelite nuns (No. 9, Rue du Val-de-Grâce). Her savings were their first fund; but Renan made his way very rapidly in journalism; he had soon attracted the notice of great men, and became a regular contributor, among other journals, to the *Débats* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Early in 1851 he was appointed to a post in the Bibliothèque Nationale, at five francs a day. In 1852 he obtained his doctor's degree with a thesis on Averroës, which he published at his own expense. This, his first actual book, cost him 1,378 francs of capital outlay, but repaid him well in the long run. Next year came the Coup d'État; his superior, Hauréau, with nearly forty professors, refused to swear allegiance to Napoleon III. and were expelled; Renan, a more obscure functionary, was spared the trial. In spite of the obvious theological unorthodoxy of his writings, he was unmolested by the Government, and even patronized. In 1855 he was elected to the Institut; in 1856 he married the sister of Ary Scheffer, the painter; in 1860 he was made Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur and sent on an official mission to Beyrouth to collect Phœnician inscriptions. He sailed in October with his sister; his wife joined

them in December. From April to the end of May he quitted his work to visit Jerusalem and the holy places of Palestine. In June he took his wife and sister into the mountains of Lebanon; the wife then went home, but Henriette stayed with him and caught a malarial fever. When they returned to the sea, she grew worse; he was attacked also; while both lay unconscious, she passed away (September 24), and he recovered slowly, to sail homeward on October 10. His search for inscriptions had produced little; he was really out of his element there; but he brought home the rough draft of his *Vie de Jésus*. Next January he was appointed Professor of Hebrew at the Collège de France. The clergy and the Empress soon procured an imperial decree forbidding his lectures. On June 24, 1863, he published his *Vie de Jésus*. His *Souvenirs* tell us how good a friend he had found meanwhile in the rising publisher Michel Levy, who pushed this remarkable book with almost equally remarkable business ability. In less than five months 60,000 copies were sold; and, within about a year and a half, it had been translated into eleven languages; Sainte-Beuve said truly that no novel had enjoyed a success comparable to this. Henceforward he was assured of an income sufficient for his needs. In 1865 he journeyed again to the

East, this time on his own account, to study the scenery for the next two volumes of his *Origins of Christianity: The Apostles* (1866) and *St. Paul* (1869). In 1869 he plunged into politics, and stood for the Corps Législatif, but failed; he failed again in the elections of 1871. The Franco-German War resulted in a breach between him and D. F. Strauss, who certainly gave inexcusable provocation. The *Souvenirs* began to appear in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1876; in 1878 he was elected to the Academy; in 1881 he had finished the seven volumes of his *Origins of Christianity* and begun his *History of the People of Israel*. In 1885 he hired a country house near his own home in Brittany, in which he passed successive summers. Thenceforward there is little to record but further literary successes and increasing bodily infirmities. He died in 1892, having exercised in his later years something like to the literary dictatorship of Voltaire, or to that of a very different man in a very different country, Dr. Johnson. He lived to see not only the success of his ideas, but a very strong reaction; there were young folk who still swore by him, and young folk who had sworn by him for a while only.

For, in a very real sense, he had his finger on the pulse both of the present and of the past. He thought

most, and wrote most, concerning religion—a topic which can never fail to be, in one form or another, one of the chief concerns of the human mind; religion was Renan's main preoccupation from childhood to old age. The man who is really interested here can never fail to interest others. Not only the men of Athens at one given time, but myriads of men and women in all ages are concerned either to tell or to hear some new thing that shall bear upon the riddle of life; and, while teacher after teacher stammers out his own imperfect solution, it depends only upon each man's sincerity that, while some mock, others shall say: "We will hear thee again of this matter." That spirit will never wholly die which inspired the unnamed Saxon noble to claim a hearing for Paulinus of York. "Man's present life on earth, O King, in comparison with that time whereof we know nothing, is like unto a little sparrow. For, when thou sittest at feast with thy chiefs and thy ministers in winter-tide, and the blazing fire on the hearth warms the whole hall, and gusts of winter rain or snow are raging without, then a little bird will flutter into your hall by one door and fly out swiftly by another. Whilst he is within, he feeleth neither winter nor storm; yet that brief interval of quiet is quickly past, and he is soon lost to thine eyes, in the wintry dark-

ness from whence he came. Thus do we see man's brief span of life; what came before, and what shall come after, of that we know nothing. Wherefore, if this new doctrine can give us any sure help here, it would seem worthy of our attention."[1] But such doctrine takes many forms; and Renan, in these *Souvenirs* with which we are here mostly occupied, speaks from a standpoint which would have shocked Paulinus.

He was far more interested in ecclesiastical history than in speculative theology. To write most truly in the former field (he has said elsewhere), two conditions are necessary: the author must have believed, and he must believe no longer. And Cardinal Newman, with that penetration and knowledge of human nature which so often give a double edge to his observations, had practically anticipated Renan when he wrote: "It is melancholy to say it; but the chief, perhaps the only, English writer who has any claim to be considered an ecclesiastical historian is the infidel Gibbon."[2] Gibbon had been Protestant and Roman Catholic and free-thinker, and he saw the long perspective of history from that triple standpoint. We may not think him unbiased, but his experi-

[1] Bede, *Eccl. Hist.*, Bk. II., ch. 13.
[2] *Essay on Development*, 1845, Introd., p. 5.

ence had given him the power of seizing salient points in their significance not for the past only, but still more for the future. And Gibbon's autobiography, itself a monument of sound literature, supplies a great deal that may help us to understand Renan. There are sentences which Renan himself might have written: "When I contemplate the common lot of mortality, I must acknowledge that I have drawn a high prize in the lottery of life. . . . According to the scale of Switzerland I am a rich man; and I am indeed rich, since my income is superior to my expence, and my expence is equal to my wishes. . . . My tender constitution has been fortified by time . . . ; and the inestimable gift of the sound and peaceful slumbers of infancy may be imputed both to the mind and body." Most significant of all, perhaps, is the sentence where Gibbon sums up the things which may be learnt from foreign travel, and ascribes to the perfect learner "a virtue which borders on a vice; the flexible temper which can assimilate itself to every tone of society from the court to the cottage; the happy flow of spirits which can amuse and be amused in every company and situation."[1] Put this side by side with the last pages of Renan's

[1] *The Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon*, edited by John Murray, 1896, pp. 270, 342-5.

Souvenirs, where he acknowledges in his own life so many happy coincidences that he is sometimes tempted to believe in predestination or in Providence; and note especially that last sentence of all: "Je n'aurai, en disant adieu à la vie, qu'à remercier la cause de tout bien de la charmante promenade qu'il m'a été donné d'accomplir à travers la réalité."

This optimism was perhaps partly the cause, partly the effect, of Gibbon's "virtue which borders on a vice"; that habit of looking at all sides which promoted tolerance, but came perilously near to indifference, and was mainly responsible for the reaction among Renan's younger pupils. Maurice Barrès, whose youth had been fascinated by the Master, portrayed him a few years later in an imaginary "Week at Mr. Renan's House"—a pamphlet which the great philosopher, losing for a moment his sense of humour, took very seriously, complaining that here was a young man to whom, as a matter of fact, he had never even offered a glass of water! Barrès's caricature is as subtle and pitiless as those of Max Beerbohm; the legendary old lady who loved Gibbon for the pious reflections in his footnotes might well read the conversations in *Huit Jours chez M. Renan*, and believe that the Sage himself was speaking. "At the age of twelve, my young friend, I was

already what I am now, rheumatism included; since then, I have learned nothing but familiarity with dictionaries." And again: "This afternoon, when I was introduced into M. Renan's study, the illustrious academician was dozing peaceably over his crabbed and ancient tomes. He awoke with perfect ease of manner, quite imperturbably, like a sage who is accustomed to pass from dreams to business. And, before I had spoken, he was already of my opinion."[1] Compare this with p. 318 of this present volume, and with Renan's confession that omnibus conductors had ceased to look upon him as a serious traveller (p. 314). Here, again, is what the disillusioned Barrès wrote in his more serious mood: "Renan loves to palm off the most perfect immoralities upon simple souls; he troubles them and he charms them. He is a splendid sophist; the man who has done most to create the moral nihilism of our present generation. . . . This Jesuitical genius, those intimate yet reticent phrases, this sermonizing Ste-Beuve, always reminds me, I know not why, of *Tartuffe*. He has such a soft hand to stroke the lady's heart as she reads him. And yet, what a relief there is in this smiling hypocrisy of

[1] The little book is very difficult to procure; but Barrès repeated the same delicate persiflage in the introduction to his novel *Le Jardin de Bérénice*.

the sceptics! what repose we find in it after all the brutalities of the daily papers and the amenities of politics, and how we take it to our hearts! In twenty years' time we shall be stretching out our arms to some slightly modified form of Catholicism."[1] And, in another place: "At his death he bequeathed to us no clear watchword, if I understand him aright, beyond the worship of lofty ideas."[2]

Yet that is much; and though Renan, with his desire to say what would please his audience, sometimes approached for a moment to that unenviable character which Dr. Johnson gave to Lord Chesterfield's *Letters*, yet his higher utterances are far more characteristic of the real man. "For my part, gentlemen, I believe in Absolute Truth. . . . It exists, and we must strain every nerve to reach it."[3] "Good is good, evil is evil." "Error is sterile, essentially perishable." "I am convinced that virtue will some day prove definitely to have been the best part. . . . An immense moral, and perhaps intellectual, degradation would follow if ever religion disappeared from the world."[4] So that Barres, how-

[1] Quoted by Giraud, *Maurice Barrès*, p. 62, from an article in *Les Taches d Encre*, November 5, 1884.

[2] Maurice Barrès, *Ernest Renan*, a lecture at the Sorbonne, published in 1923.

[3] René d'Ys, *Ernest Renan en Bretagne*, 1904, p. 237. *Cf.* Pommier, pp. 277-8.

[4] Preface to *Feuilles détachées*.

ever impatient with his hesitations and ambiguities, could testify after his death to the abiding influence of his work. "Renan aroused grief and reprobation and wrath in the Catholic world; yet to us [young men] he brought a love of Catholicism. . . . Almost all that is serious in the world of to-day (he would tell us) came from Christianity; and he brought us back to the sources of that seriousness."[1] He is thus the inspirer of the New Apologetics. The old Catholic orthodoxy rested, among other things, on the infallibility of the Bible, on its infallibility even in pure matters of history; St. Thomas Aquinas is most emphatic on this point. Renan discovered, what German rationalists and others had discovered before him, that this theory is an untenable absurdity. But he saw also, what not all the others had seen, that there were spiritual values in Catholicism independent even of its grossest historical errors. This became the basis of Alfred Loisy's apologetics, so long as Loisy remained within the Church at all; and it commands the sympathies of many modern Frenchmen whose Catholicism, when not merely political, expresses mainly their abhorrence of the crudities which too often disfigure Protestantism and Rationalism.

[1] Barrès, *loc. cit.*, pp. 5, 7.

These *Souvenirs* appeared by instalments in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* from 1876 onwards. The first chapter was written in the autumn of 1875, under the vines and fig trees of a hotel garden at Ischia, most beautiful of all islands in the Bay of Naples. *The Prayer on the Acropolis* was certainly not written on the spot; and, though it has sometimes been spoken of as his masterpiece, it is rather cloying for British taste, and we may be permitted to doubt whether it will wear so well as the rest of the book. The remaining chapters were composed on other holidays, at Ischia again, at Venice, and at Tailloires in Savoy. It is possible that this autobiography, like *Prœterita*, may be read in later centuries by thousands who will completely ignore the enormous mass of Renan's and Ruskin's other writings. For in the *Souvenirs*, as in his Preface to the companion *Feuilles détachées*, he takes the reader into his confidence, and unfolds his ripest self. The confidence is not complete; here, as elsewhere, "he hid his real mind when he wrote . . . he never said more than he wanted to say."[1] It is not only that his memory or his courage fails him on certain points of fact, which have been conscientiously corrected by Pommier and others.[2] In this book his whole life is dramatized

[1] René d'Ys, p. 228.

[2] Compare, for instance, p. 299 of this present volume with Pommier

with conscious art, as in Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. While he seems to be giving us so much, he is sometimes imposing gently upon his public, much as a cat caresses herself against her master. "I was educated by women and priests; there you have the whole explanation of my qualities and my defects."[1] To the last, his massive learning was allied with the suave exterior courtesies of the seminary. And the semi-monastic seclusion of his earlier life, even after he had broken loose from the seminary, stamped the personal side of his work with some of the characteristics which we may find in medieval monastic chroniclers. In his treatment of love between men and women, he has something of the greasy touch of a priest, even when he differs most profoundly from the Church. In face of worldly business, as he tells us himself, he was a child; and he looked upon his fellow-men, with all their business and their loves and hates, with something of a child's insatiable curiosity; he described it all with the

(p. 107), who contrasts it with the fact that in 1857, when Renan was hoping for the professorship of Hebrew, "he sent letter after letter to Berthelot . . . begging him to work upon two men who held professorships at the Collège de France" in favour of his candidature. Renan's descriptions of his relations with Berthelot and Henriette are idealized in the *Souvenirs*. See Pommier, pp. 89, 90, 104, 109, 132-138, 176.

[1] *Feuilles détachées*, p. xxx.

child's half-unconscious power of mimicry, pointed, here and there, with the child's delicate malice. In satire, he had the feline touch to perfection. When his fellow-scholar and fellow-rationalist Strauss, writing to Renan from victorious Germany, and calling upon France to acknowledge her defeats in war as punishment of her sins, was so culpably tactless as to print the correspondence without asking his friend's leave, and to sell it in aid of the German wounded, Renan replied in a letter which has never been excelled in delicate irony. "God forbid that I should wrangle with you on points of copyright! Moreover, the work for which you have compelled my contribution is a work of humanity; and, if my poor prose has managed to procure a few cigars for the men who pillaged my little house at Sèvres, I am grateful to you for having enabled me to act up to some of the precepts of Jesus which seem to me most authentic."

But the highest value of this, as of all great autobiographies, resides in the life that lies behind it. Renan's learning has been severely criticized by specialists, and his scientific work will probably be soon out of date. Yet that learning was enormous in extent, even when we have made all deductions that the professional philosopher will make from his

philosophy, the Orientalist from his philology, and the historian from his originality or accuracy. The claim on p. 329 of this present book is, naturally enough, exaggerated.[1] Yet nobody has ever laboured harder to acquire all the knowledge possible to his own age; whatever blasphemies Renan might sometimes utter against Knowledge, his life was, in fact, devoted to her with a single-minded persistency which is rare in any generation. He was the most learned of all the great autobiographers, even more learned for his age than St. Augustine, and Augustine's equal in literary power; only he had far less "fire in his belly." Here he shows the defect of his qualities, and we may take our text from his own words (p. 314): "I have long since given up taking the omnibus; the conductor came to look upon me as a passenger who did not know what he was about." If Renan had jostled for fame as we creatures of common clay jostle for the omnibus, he would not only have deserved less success, but secured less. Yet, at the other extreme, our irresolution does not always help the public; it may become a public

[1] The original French seems to me somewhat stronger than Mr. Pitman's version; like much of Renan's prose, it is so subtle as almost to defy exact translation, but I think we should get nearer by rendering: "Henceforth I shall learn little more; I see clearly nearly all the truth that the human mind, at this stage of development, is capable of apprehending."

hindrance, not only to the omnibus, but to intellectual progress; the bus conductor is not seldom a wiser man in his generation than many children of light. Renan yielded almost as deeply as Amiel to the luxury of flitting from flower to flower and committing himself to none; he was an accomplished model of the Higher Epicureanism. Yet, at the back, there was always what Turner claimed as the secret of his own success—"damned hard work." Common folk who contemplate all human activities from their own quiet and detached standpoint may be called lotus-eaters; but Renan played this part at such Olympian heights that we range him among the gods.

> "But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
> Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
> Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong."

Barrès makes Renan explain the practical conservatism which underlay his licence of abstract thought. "Une seule [raison] suffira; mon hygiène s'oppose à ce que je désire voir modifier avant que je meure la forme des institutions"; and the sting is not less effective because the reader might almost accept this sentence as an actual quotation from the *Souvenirs*.[1]

[1] *Le Jardin de Bérénice*, preface. "One reason will suffice: considerations of personal health forbid my desiring any modification in our institutions during my own lifetime."

Yet he postponed health to work; and he died in harness, less than ten years after the farewell pages of this book. Little by little he approached that stage which he has described in *Marcus Aurelius*: "His wisdom was absolute; in other words, his boredom was unlimited"; yet he worked steadily on. His dear old master in Brittany, Abbé Pasco, had devoted his dying prayers to Renan's return, and almost his last words had been: "Do not despair of Ernest Renan; I promise you, he will come back to God." Yet, in Pasco's sense, he came no nearer than we find him in the last words of these *Souvenirs*, protesting against the weakness which had brought the priests to the deathbed of his friend Littré. He had often said: "The most important act of our lives is death"; and this was not belied in his own end. He had long suffered from the maladies incidental to excessive brain-work and lack of exercise; personal experience persuaded him that St. Paul's terrible *skolops en sarki*, the "thorn in the flesh," was plain prosaic rheumatism.[1] In 1889 he wrote: "In my better moments, I can walk my two little kilometres a day." He grew a little stronger during that fine summer, labouring at the two con-

[1] *Feuilles détachées*, p. 211. By a small characteristic slip, of the kind that would have distressed an accurate textual scholar, Renan here misquotes the Greek, writing ἐν for τῇ.

cluding volumes of his *Histoire d'Israel*; but he was burning the candle at both ends, for he walked even less than before, and began to rise early after sleeping late. In his country-house of Rosmapamon, by the Breton sea, he spent his evenings in the open air, sitting beside his wife with the heather at their feet and the ocean for their horizon; early next morning he was in the garden, admiring the blackbirds and jays as they plunged their beaks into his fruit, and interested in everything. The last two volumes went well under his hand; he could confess: "I have serious doubts as to personal immortality; yet nearly all my actions aim at a goal beyond this life; I love my work as it shall be after my death; I feel as if I shall then be far more truly alive than I am to-day." He dreamed, when at last the two concluding volumes should be printed, of settling down into a dozing contentment, reading novels, "the novel of to-day." In November he went in search of sunshine to Cap Martin in Provence; the warmth and the blue sea took him back to Syria and the days when his imagination had overflowed in the *Vie de Jésus*. He felt that the end was near; but "let us die calmly, in communion with Humanity and the Religion of the Future." Yet his insatiable curiosity had its inextinguishable regrets, which break out in the

preface to *Feuilles détachées*, with his appeal to "my dear children" of the new generation. "How many things you will know forty or fifty years hence, which I shall never know! How many problems you will see solved! How will the inmost soul of the Kaiser William II. develop? What will be the end of the conflict of European nationalities? What turn will the social question take? Will the Socialist movement, in the proper sense of that term, come to anything? What will be the coming fate of the Papacy? Alas! I shall die without seeing anything of these things save by conjecture, and to your eyes these riddles will be accomplished facts." In December, on the journey home, he suffered from the cold; and on New Year's Day he attended a public ceremony where, by mismanagement, he was kept standing for three-quarters of an hour in a chilly atmosphere, and came home exhausted. Next day shingles developed; then neuralgic pains; he began to lose heart, though there were still bright intervals for body and mind. At Easter he took a little holiday; in July he went down to Rosmapamon. But there he grew steadily worse; the revision of a chapter in his fourth volume gave him special trouble: "I may truly call this *Benoni*, the child of my pain." Neuralgia became almost chronic, and his digestion

began to fail. On September 15, after a party where he had seemed almost his old self among a few friends, he had a bad night and a fainting-fit. The doctor advised Paris; but the trains went wrong, and Renan had to drive two hours on a chilly evening in an open carriage. When they reached his home at the Collège de France, Renan thanked his wife for having "brought him back to die"; to his old friend Berthelot, he quoted, "The days of our years are threescore and ten"; he was then just over sixty-nine and a half. On September 30 he was plainly worse; there was not only pain, but heart-failure. He saw his wife's distress in her face, and bade her take courage; then he added: "I die in communion with Humanity and the Religion of the Future." "Then the dying man began to speak of the Church. 'This is the moment at which she used to seize upon dying men. She was strong indeed; she regulated men's lives; what a force there is in doing the same thing every day at the same hour!' . . . When his wife asked what she would do without him, he said: 'Why, you will keep my work going; you will continue my life.'"[1] Next morning he fainted again; and when he revived his mind was wandering; he

[1] Pommier, pp. 359 *ff.*, upon which almost all these present pages are based.

wished to dress and go to lecture. Then he began to dictate to his son: "*The Architecture of Mussulman Mosques under the Ommeyad Dynasty.* We can see clearly that this architecture . . . no, write: We can distinctly see . . ." Then, with a firm and decided hand, he signed a sheet of blank paper. He woke up in the evening, complained of disorder in the house and distress on his wife's face, and added: "Put all this straight by to-morrow; I shall start work again to-morrow. One can't do anything without order and without regular hours." All through the night he grew worse; contrary to his wont, he was in continual complaint: "O God, have pity on me! I have pity on myself." They asked where his pain lay; "he answered, 'Everywhere!' and repeated his distressing appeal. Then a sudden prolonged gasp, soon followed by another, and then the calm of death" (October 2, 1892).

The three best biographies in English are by Mme. Darmesteter, who knew him personally, but wrote rather under the immediate hypnotism of his great reputation (Methuen, 1897); by Dr. W. Barry, who has tried to do him justice from the Roman Catholic point of view (Hodder and Stoughton, 1905); and by Professor L. F. Mott (Appleton, 1921; far fuller, clearly dated and documented, and with the advan-

tage of longer reflexion). But the best of all is the most recent, by Jean Pommier (Perrin, 1923), who has made full use of his predecessors and gathered other valuable documentary evidence. For one side of Renan's character, the fullest evidence comes from René d'Ys, *Ernest Renan en Bretagne* (Émile Paul, 1904).

The two portraits which are here given have been chosen to illustrate the points upon which all descriptions are agreed; they represent Renan, therefore, in his more favourable and less favourable exterior aspects. "He is a model of moral grace," wrote the de Goncourt brothers, "under his bodily ungracefulness"; and Léon Daudet gives the impressions of a schoolboy at a prize-giving: "Renan addressed us in a clear and affectionate voice, with his eyes half shut in his broad face, looking like an elephant without a trunk."

PREFACE

One of the most popular legends in Brittany is that relating to an imaginary town called Is, which is supposed to have been swallowed up by the sea at some unknown time. There are several places along the coast which are pointed out as the site of this imaginary city, and the fishermen have many strange tales to tell of it. According to them, the tips of the spires of the churches may be seen in the hollow of the waves when the sea is rough, while during a calm the music of their bells, ringing out the hymn appropriate to the day, rises above the waters. I often fancy that I have at the bottom of my heart a city of Is with its bells calling to prayer a recalcitrant congregation. At times I halt to listen to these gentle vibrations which seem as if they came from immeasurable depths, like voices from another world. Since old age began to steal over me, I have loved, more especially during the repose which summer

brings with it, to gather up these distant echoes of a vanished Atlantis.

This it is which has given birth to the six chapters which make up the present volume. The recollections of my childhood do not pretend to form a complete and continuous narrative. They are merely the images which arose before me and the reflections which suggested themselves to me while I was calling up a past fifty years old, written down in the order in which they came. Goethe selected as the title for his memoirs *Truth and Poetry*, thereby signifying that a man cannot write his own biography in the same way that he would that of any one else. What one says of oneself is always poetical. To fancy that the small details of one's own life are worth recording is to be guilty of very petty vanity. A man writes such things in order to transmit to others the theory of the universe which he carries within himself. The form of the present work seemed to me a convenient one for expressing certain shades of thought which my previous writings did not convey. I had no desire to furnish information about myself for the future use of those who might wish to write essays or articles about me.

What in history is a recommendation would here have been a drawback ; the whole of this small volume

is true, but not true in the sense required for a 'Biographical Dictionary'. I have said several things with the intent to raise a smile, and, if such a thing had been compatible with custom, I might have used the expression *cum grano salis* as a marginal note in many cases. I have been obliged to be very careful in what I wrote. Many of the persons to whom I refer may be still alive; and those who are not accustomed to find themselves in print have a sort of horror of publicity. I have, therefore, altered several proper names. In other cases, by means of a slight transposition of date and place, I have rendered identification impossible. The story of *The Flax-crusher* is absolutely true, with the exception that the name of the manor-house is a fictitious one. With regard to *Good Master Système*, I have been furnished by M. Duportal du Godasmeur with further details which do not confirm certain ideas entertained by my mother as to the mystery in which this aged recluse enveloped his existence. I have, however, made no change in the body of the work, thinking that it would be better to leave M. Duportal to publish the true story, known only to himself, of this enigmatic character.

The chief defect for which I should feel some apology necessary if this book had any pretension to

be considered a regular memoir of my life, is that there are many gaps in it. The person who had the greatest influence on my life, my sister Henriette, is scarcely mentioned in it.[1] In September 1862, a year after the death of this invaluable friend, I wrote for the few persons who had known her well, a short notice of her life. Only a hundred copies were printed. My sister was so unassuming, and she was so averse from the stress and stir of the world that I should have fancied I could hear her reproaching me from her grave, if I had made this sketch public property. I have more than once been tempted to include it in this volume, but on second thoughts I have felt that to do so would be an act of profanation. The pamphlet in question was read and appreciated by a few persons who were kindly disposed towards her and towards myself. It would

[1] Upon the very day that this volume was going to press, news reached me of the death of my brother, snapping the last thread of the recollections of my childhood's home. My brother Alain was a warm and true friend to me; he never failed to understand me, to approve my course of action and to love me. His clear and sound intellect and his great capacity for work adapted him for a profession in which mathematical knowledge is of value or for magisterial functions. The misfortunes of our family caused him to follow a different career, and he underwent many hardships with unshaken courage. He never complained of his lot, though life had scant enjoyment save that which is derived from love of home. These joys are, however, unquestionably the most unalloyed.

be wrong of me to expose a memory so sacred in my eyes to the supercilious criticisms which are part and parcel of the right acquired by the purchaser of a book. It seemed to me that in placing the lines referring to her in a book for the trade I should be acting with as much impropriety as if I sent a portrait of her for sale to an auction room. The pamphlet in question will not, therefore, be reprinted until after my death, appended to it, very possibly being several of her letters selected by me beforehand.

The natural sequence of this book, which is neither more nor less than the sequence in the various periods of my life, brings about a sort of contrast between the anecdotes of Brittany and those of the Seminary, the latter being the details of a darksome struggle, full of reasonings and hard scholasticism, while the recollections of my earlier years are instinct with the impressions of childlike sensitiveness, of candour, of innocence, and of affection. There is nothing surprising about this contrast. Nearly all of us are double. The more a man develops intellectually, the stronger is his attraction to the opposite pole: that is to say, to the irrational, to the repose of mind in absolute ignorance, to the woman who is merely a woman, the instinctive being who acts solely from the impulse of an obscure conscience. The fierce school

of controversy, in which the mind of Europe has been involved since the time of Abelard, induces periods of mental drought and aridity. The brain, parched by reasoning, thirsts for simplicity, like the desert for spring water. When reflection has brought us up to the last limit of doubt, the spontaneous affirmation of the good and of the beautiful which is to be found in the female conscience delights us and settles the question for us. This is why religion is preserved to the world by woman alone. A beautiful and a virtuous woman is the mirage which peoples with lakes and green avenues our great moral desert. The superiority of modern science consists in the fact that each step forward it takes is a step further in the order of abstractions. We make chemistry from chemistry, algebra from algebra ; the very indefatigability with which we fathom nature removes us further from her. This is as it should be, and let no one fear to prosecute his researches, for out of this merciless dissection comes life. But we need not be surprised at the feverish heat which, after these orgies of dialectics, can only be calmed by the kisses of the artless creature in whom nature lives and smiles. Woman restores us to communication with the eternal spring in which God reflects Himself. The candour of a child, unconscious of its own beauty and

seeing God clear as the daylight, is the great revelation of the ideal, just as the unconscious coquetry of the flower is a proof that Nature adorns herself for a husband.

One should never write except upon that which one loves. Oblivion and silence are the proper punishments to be inflicted upon all that we meet with in the way of what is ungainly or vulgar in the course of our journey through life. Referring to a past which is dear to me, I have spoken of it with kindly sympathy; but I should be sorry to create any misapprehension, and to be taken for an uncompromising reactionist. I love the past, but I envy the future. It would have been very pleasant to have lived upon this planet at as late a period as possible. Descartes would be delighted if he could read some trivial work on natural philosophy and cosmography written in the present day. The fourth form school boy of our age is acquainted with truths to know which Archimedes would have laid down his life. What would we not give to be able to get a glimpse of some book which will be used as a school-primer a hundred years hence?

We must not, because of our personal tastes, our prejudices perhaps, set ourselves to oppose the action of our time. This action goes on without

regard to us, and probably it is right. The world is moving in the direction of what I may call a kind of Americanism, which shocks our refined ideas, but which, when once the crisis of the present hour is over, may very possibly not be more inimical than the ancient *régime* to the only thing which is of any real importance; viz. the emancipation and progress of the human mind. A society in which personal distinction is of little account, in which talent and wit are not marketable commodities, in which exalted functions do not ennoble, in which politics are left to men devoid of standing or ability, in which the recompenses of life are accorded by preference to intrigue, to vulgarity, to the charlatans who cultivate the art of puffing, and to the smart people who just keep without the clutches of the law, would never suit us. We have been accustomed to a more protective system, and to the government patronizing what is noble and worthy. But we have not secured this patronage for nothing. Richelieu and Louis XIV. looked upon it as their duty to provide pensions for men of merit all the world over; how much better it would have been, if the spirit of the time had admitted of it, that they should have left the men of merit to themselves! The period of the Restoration has the credit of being a liberal

one ; yet we should certainly not like to live now under a *régime* which warped such a genius as Cuvier, stifled with paltry compromises the keen mind of M. Cousin, and retarded the growth of criticism by half a century. The concessions which had to be made to the court, to society, and to the clergy, were far worse than the petty annoyances which a democracy can inflict upon us.

The eighteen years of the monarchy of July were in reality a period of liberty, but the official direction given to things of the mind was often superficial and no better than would be expected of the average shopkeeper. With regard to the second empire, if the ten last years of its duration in some measure repaired the mischief done in the first eight, it must never be forgotten how strong this government was when it was a question of crushing the intelligence, and how feeble when it came to raising it up. The present hour is a gloomy one, and the immediate outlook is not cheerful. Our unfortunate country is ever threatened with heart disease, and all Europe is a prey to some deep-rooted malady. But by way of consolation, let us reflect upon what we have suffered. The evil to come must be grevious indeed if we cannot say :

" O passi graviora, dabit deus his quoque finem."

The one object in life is the development of the mind, and the first condition for the development of the mind is that it should have liberty. The worst social state, from this point of view, is the theocratic state, like Islamism or the ancient Pontifical state, in which dogma reigns supreme. Nations with an exclusive state religion, like Spain, are not much better off. Nations in which a religion of the majority is recognized are also exposed to serious drawbacks. In behalf of the real or assumed beliefs of the greatest number, the state considers itself bound to impose upon thought terms which it cannot accept. The belief or the opinion of the one side should not be a fetter upon the other side. As long as the masses were believers, that is to say, as long as the same sentiments were almost universally professed by a people, freedom of research and discussion was impossible. A colossal weight of stupidity pressed down upon the human mind. The terrible catastrophe of the middle ages, that break of a thousand years in the history of civilization, is due less to the barbarians than to the triumph of the dogmatic spirit among the masses.

This is a state of things which is coming to an end in our time, and we cannot be surprised if some disturbance ensues. There are no longer masses which believe; a great number of the people decline

to recognise the supernatural, and the day is not far distant, when beliefs of this kind will die out altogether in the masses, just as the belief in familiar spirits and ghosts have disappeared. Even if, as is probable, we are to have a temporary Catholic reaction, the people will not revert to the Church. Religion has become for once and all a matter of personal taste. Now beliefs are only dangerous when they represent something like unanimity, or an unquestionable majority. When they are merely individual, there is not a word to be said against them, and it is our duty to treat them with the respect which they do not always exhibit for their adversaries, when they feel that they have force at their back.

There can be no denying that it will take time for the liberty, which is the aim and object of human society, to take root in France as it has in America. French democracy has several essential principles to acquire, before it can become a liberal *régime*. It will be above all things necessary that we should have laws as to associations, charitable foundations, and the right of legacy, analogous to those which are in force in England and America. Supposing this progress to be effected (if it is utopian to count upon it in France, it is not so for the rest of Europe, in which the aspirations for English liberty become

every day more intense), we should really not have much cause to look regretfully upon the favours conferred by the ancient *régime* upon things of the mind. I quite think that if democratic ideas were to secure a definitive triumph, science and scientific teaching would soon find the modest subsidies now accorded them cut off. This is an eventuality which would have to be accepted as philosophically as may be. The free foundations would take the place of the state institutes, the slight drawbacks being more than compensated for by the advantage of having no longer to make to the supposed prejudices of the majority concessions which the state exacted in return for its pittance. The waste of power in state institutes is enormous. It may safely be said that not 50 per cent of a credit voted in favour of science, art, or literature, is expended to any effect. Private foundations would not be exposed to nearly so much waste. It is true that spurious science would, in these conditions, flourish side by side with real science, enjoying the same privileges, and that there would be no official criterion, as there still is to a certain extent now, to distinguish the one from the other. But this criterion becomes every day less reliable. Reason has to submit to the indignity of taking second place behind those who have a loud

voice, and who speak with a tone of command. The plaudits and favour of the public will, for a long time to come, be at the service of what is false. But the true has great power, when it is free ; the true endures ; the false is ever changing and decays. Thus it is that the true, though only understood by a select few, always rises to the surface, and in the end prevails.

In short, it is very possible that the American-like social condition towards which we are advancing, independently of any particular form of government, will not be more intolerable for persons of intelligence than the better guaranteed social conditions which we have already been subject to. In such a world as this will be, it will be no difficult matter to create very quiet and snug retreats for oneself. "The era of mediocrity in all things is about to begin," remarked a short time ago that distinguished thinker, M. Arniel of Geneva. "Equality begets uniformity, and it is by the sacrifice of the excellent, the remarkable, the extraordinary that we extirpate what is bad. The whole becomes less coarse ; but the whole becomes more vulgar." We may at least hope that vulgarity will not yet a while persecute freedom of mind. Descartes, living in the brilliant seventeenth century, was nowhere so well off as at Amsterdam, because, as "every one was engaged in trade there," no one

paid any heed to him. It may be that general vulgarity will one day be the condition of happiness, for the worst American vulgarity would not send Giordano Bruno to the stake or persecute Galileo. We have no right to be very fastidious. In the past we were never more than tolerated. This tolerance, if nothing more, we are assured of in the future. A narrow-minded, democratic *régime* is often, as we know, very troublesome. But for all that men of intelligence find that they can live in America, as long as they are not too exacting. *Noli me tangere* is the most one can ask for from democracy. We shall pass through several alternatives of anarchy and despotism before we find repose in this happy medium. But liberty is like truth; scarcely any one loves it on its own account, and yet, owing to the impossibility of extremes, one always comes back to it.

We may as well, therefore, allow the destinies of this planet to work themselves out without undue concern. We should gain nothing by exclaiming against them, and a display of temper would be very much out of place. It is by no means certain that the earth is not falling short of its destiny, as has probably happened to countless worlds; it is even possible that our age may one day be regarded as

the culminating point since which humanity has been steadily deteriorating ; but the universe does not know the meaning of the word discouragement ; it will commence anew the work which has come to naught ; each fresh check leaves it young, alert, and full of illusions. Be of good cheer, Nature ! Pursue, like the deaf and blind star-fish which vegetates in the bed of the ocean, thy obscure task of life ; persevere ; mend for the millionth time the broken meshes of the net ; repair the boring-machine which sinks to the last limits of the attainable the well from which living water will spring up. Sight and sight again the aim which thou hast failed to hit throughout the ages ; try to struggle through the scarcely perceptible opening which leads to another firmament. Thou hast the infinity of time and space to try the experiment. He who can commit blunders with impunity is always certain to succeed.

Happy they who shall have had a part in this great final triumph which will be the complete advent of God ! A Paradise lost is always, for him who wills it so, a Paradise regained. Often as Adam must have mourned the loss of Eden, I fancy that if he lived, as we are told, 930 years after his fall, he must often have exclaimed : *Felix culpa !*

Truth is, whatever may be said to the contrary, superior to all fictions. One ought never to regret seeing clearer into the depths. By endeavouring to increase the treasure of the truths which form the paid-up capital of humanity, we shall be carrying on the work of our pious ancestors, who loved the good and the true as it was understood in their time. The most fatal error is to believe that one serves one's country by calumniating those who founded it. All ages of a nation are leaves of the self-same book. The true men of progress are those who profess as their starting-point a profound respect for the past. All that we do, all that we are, is the outcome of ages of labour. For my own part, I never feel my liberal faith more firmly rooted in me than when I ponder over the miracles of the ancient creed, nor more ardent for the work of the future than when I have been listening for hours to the bells of the city of Is.

THE FLAX-CRUSHER

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY YOUTH

THE FLAX-CRUSHER

PART I.

TRÉGUIER, my native place, has grown into a town out of an ancient monastery founded at the close of the fifth century by St. Tudwal (or Tual), one of the religious leaders of those great migratory movements which introduced into the Armorican peninsula the name, the race, and the religious institutions of the island of Britain. The predominating characteristic of early British Christianity was its monastic tendency, and there were no bishops, at all events among the immigrants, whose first step, after landing in Brittany, the north coast of which must at that time have been very sparsely inhabited, was to build large monasteries, the abbots of which had the cure

of souls. A circle of from three to five miles in circumference, called the *minihi*, was drawn around each monastery, and the territory within it was invested with special privileges.

The monasteries were called in the Breton dialect *pabu* after the monks (*papæ*), and in this way the monastery of Tréguier was known as *Pabu Tual*.

It was the religious centre of all that part of the peninsula which stretches northward. Monasteries of a similar kind at St. Pol de Léon, St. Brieuc, St. Malo, and St. Samson, near Dol, held a like position upon the coast. They possessed, if one may so speak, their diocese, for in these regions separated from the rest of Christianity nothing was known of the power of Rome and of the religious institutions which prevailed in the Latin world, or even in the Gallo-Roman towns of Rennes and Nantes hard by.

When Noménoé, in the ninth century, reduced to something like a regular organisation this half savage society of emigrants and created the Duchy of Brittany by annexing to the territory in which the Breton tongue was spoken, the Marches of Brittany, established by the Carlovingians to hold in respect the forayers of the west, he found it advisable to assimilate its religious organisation to that of the rest of the world. He determined, therefore, that there should be bishops on the northern coast, as

there were at Rennes, Nantes, and Vannes, and he accordingly converted into bishoprics the monasteries of St. Pol de Léon, Tréguier, St. Brieuc, St. Malo, and Dol. He would have liked to have had an archbishop as well and so form a separate ecclesiastical province, but, despite the well-intentioned devices employed to prove that St. Samson had been a metropolitan prelate, the grades of the Church universal were already apportioned, and the new bishoprics were perforce compelled to attach themselves to the nearest Gallo-Roman province at Tours.

The meaning of these obscure beginnings gradually faded away, and from the name of *Pabu Tual*, *Papa Tual*, found, as was reported, upon some old stained-glass windows, it was inferred that St. Tudwal had been Pope. The explanation seemed a very simple one, for St. Tudwal, it was well known, had been to Rome, and he was so holy a man that what could be more natural than that the cardinals, when they became acquainted with him, should have selected him for the vacant See. Such things were always happening, and the godly persons of Tréguier were very proud of the pontifical reign of their patron saint. The more reasonable ecclesiastics, however, admitted that it was no easy matter to discover among the list of popes the pontiff who previous to his election was known as Tudwal.

In course of time a small town grew up around

the bishop's palace, but the lay town, dependent entirely upon the Church, increased very slowly. The port failed to acquire any importance, and no wealthy trading class came into existence. A very fine cathedral was built towards the close of the thirteenth century, and from the beginning of the seventeenth the monasteries became so numerous that they formed whole streets to themselves. The bishop's palace, a handsome building of the seventeenth century, and a few canons' residences were the only houses inhabited by people of civilized habits. In the lower part of the town, at the end of the High Street, which was flanked by several turreted buildings, were a few inns for the accommodation of the sailors.

It was only just before the Revolution that a petty nobility, recruited for the most part from the country around, sprang up under the shadow of the bishop's palace. Brittany contained two distinct orders of nobility. The first derived its titles from the King of France and displayed in a very marked degree the defects and the qualities which characterised the French nobility. The other was of Celtic origin and thoroughly Breton. This latter nobility comprised, from the period of the invasion, the chief men of the parish, the leaders of the people, of the same race as them, possessing by inheritance the right of marching at their head and representing them. No one was more deserving of respect than this country nobleman

when he remained a peasant, innocent of all intrigues or of any effort to grow rich : but when he came to reside in town he lost nearly all his good qualities and contributed but little to the moral and intellectual progress of the country.

The Revolution seemed for this agglomeration of priests and monks neither more nor less than a death warrant. The last of the bishops of Tréguier left one evening by a back door leading into the wood behind his palace and fled to England. The concordat abolished the bishopric, and the unfortunate town was not even given a sub-prefect, Lannion and Guingamp, which are larger and busier, being selected in preference. But large buildings, fitted up so as to fulfil only one object, nearly always lead to the reconstitution of the object to which they were destined. We may say morally what is not true physically : when the hollows of a shell are very deep, these hollows have the power of re-forming the animal moulded in them. The vast monastic edifices of Tréguier were once more peopled, and the former seminary served for the establishment of an ecclesiastical college, very highly esteemed throughout the province. Tréguier again became in a few years' time what St. Tudwal had made it thirteen centuries before, a town of priests, cut off from all trade and industry, a vast monastery within whose walls no sounds from the outer world ever penetrated, where ordinary human pursuits were looked upon as

vanity and vexation of spirit, while those things which laymen treated as chimerical were regarded as the only realities.

It was amid associations like these that I passed my childhood, and it gave a bent to my character which has never been removed. The cathedral, a masterpiece of airy lightness, a hopeless effort to realise in granite an impossible ideal, first of all warped my judgment. The long hours which I spent there are responsible for my utter lack of practical knowledge. That architectural paradox made me a man of chimeras, a disciple of St. Tudwal, St. Iltud, and St. Cadoc, in an age when their teaching is no longer of any practical use. When I went to the more secular town of Guingamp, where I had some relatives of the middle class, I felt very ill at ease, and the only pleasant companion I had there was an aged servant to whom I used to read fairy tales. I longed to be back in the sombre old place, overshadowed by its cathedral, but a living protest, so to speak, against all that is mean and commonplace. I felt myself again when I got back to the lofty steeple, the pointed nave, and the cloisters with their fifteenth century tombs, being always at my ease when in the company of the dead, by the side of the cavaliers and proud dames, sleeping peacefully with their hound at their feet, and a massive stone torch in their grasp. The outskirts of the town had the same religious and

idealistic aspect, and were enveloped in an atmosphere of mythology as dense as Benares or Juggernaut. The church of St. Michael, from which the open sea could be discerned, had been destroyed by lightning and was the scene of many prodigies. Upon Maunday Thursday the children of Tréguier were taken there to see the bells go off to Rome. We were blindfolded, and much we then enjoyed seeing all the bells in the peal, beginning with the largest and ending with the smallest, arrayed in the embroidered lace robes which they had been dressed in upon their baptismal day, cleaving the air on their way to Rome for the Pope's benediction.

Upon the opposite side of the river there was the beautiful valley of the Tromeur, watered by a sacred fountain which Christianity had hallowed by connecting it with the worship of the Virgin. The chapel was burnt down in 1828, but it was at once rebuilt, and the statue of the Virgin was replaced by a much more handsome one. That fidelity to the traditions of the past which is the chief trait in the Breton character was very strikingly illustrated in this connection, for the new statue, which was radiant with white and gold over the high altar, received but few devotions, the prayers of the faithful being said to the black and calcined trunk of the old statue which was relegated to a corner of the chapel. The Bretons would have thought that to pay their

devotions to the new Virgin was tantamount to turning their backs upon their predecessor.

St. Yves was the object of even deeper popular devotion, the patron saint of the lawyers having been born in the *minihi* of Tréguier, where the church dedicated to him is held in great veneration. This champion of the poor, the widows and the orphans, is looked upon as the grand justiciary and avenger of wrong. Those who have been badly used have only to repair to the solemn little chapel of *Saint Yves de la Vérité*, and to repeat the words : " Thou wert just in thy lifetime, prove that thou art so still," to ensure that their oppressor will die within the year. He becomes the protector of all those who are left friendless, and at my father's death my mother took me to his chapel and placed me under his tutelary care. I cannot say that the good St. Yves managed our affairs very successfully, or gave me a very clear understanding of my worldly interests, but I nevertheless have much to thank him for, as he endowed me with a spirit of content which passeth riches, and a native good humour which has never left me.

The month of May, during which the festival of St. Yves fell, was one long round of processions to the *minihi*, and as the different parishes, preceded by their processional crucifixes, met in the roads, the crucifixes were pressed one against the other in token of friendship. Upon the eve of the festival the

people assembled in the church, and on the stroke of midnight the saint stretched out his arms to bless the kneeling congregation. But if among them all there was one doubting soul who raised his eyes to see if the miracle really did take place, the saint, taking just offence at such a suspicion did not move, and by the misconduct of this incredulous person, no benediction was given.

The clergy of the place, disinterested and honest to the core, contrived to steer a middle course between not doing anything to weaken these ideas and not compromising themselves. These worthy men were my first spiritual guides, and I have them to thank for whatever may be good in me. Their every word was my law, and I had so much respect for them that I never thought to doubt anything they told me until I was sixteen years of age, when I came to Paris. Since that time I have studied under many teachers far more brilliant and learned, but none have inspired such feelings of veneration, and this has often led to differences of opinion between some of my friends and myself. It has been my good fortune to know what absolute virtue is. I know what faith is, and though I have since discovered how deep a fund of irony there is in the most sacred of our illusions, yet the experience derived from the days of old is very precious to me. I feel that in reality my existence is still governed by

a faith which I no longer possess, for one of the peculiarities of faith is that its action does not cease with its disappearance. Grace survives by mere force of habit the living sensation of it which we have felt. In a mechanical kind of way we go on doing what we had before been doing in spirit and in truth. After Orpheus, when he had lost his ideal, was torn to pieces by the Thracian women, his lyre still repeated Eurydice's name.

The point to which the priests attached the highest importance was moral conduct, and their own spotless lives entitled them to be severe in this respect, while their sermons made such an impression upon me that during the whole of my youth I never once forgot their injunctions. These sermons were so awe-inspiring, and many of the remarks which they contained are so engraved upon my memory, that I cannot even now recall them without a sort of tremor. For instance, the preacher once referred to the case of Jonathan, who died for having eaten a little honey. "*Gustans gustavi paululum mellis, et ecce morior.*" I lost myself in wonderment as to what this small quantity of honey could have been which was so fatal in its effects. The preacher said nothing to explain this, but heightened the effect of his mysterious allusion with the words—pronounced in a very hollow and lugubrious tone—*tetigisse periisse.* At other times the text would be the passage from Jeremiah, "*Mors*

ascendit per fenestras." This puzzled me still more, for what could be this death which came up through the windows, these butterfly wings which the lightest touch polluted? The preacher pronounced the words with knitted brow and uplifted eyes. But what perplexed me most of all was a passage in the life of some saintly person of the seventeenth century who compared women to firearms which wound from afar. This was quite beyond me, and I made all manner of guesses as to how a woman could resemble a pistol. It seemed so inconsistent to be told in one breath that a woman wounds from afar, and in another that to touch her is perdition. All this was so incomprehensible that I immersed myself in study, and so contrived to clear my brain of it.

Coming from persons in whom I felt unbounded confidence, these absurdities carried conviction to my very soul, and even now, after fifty years' hard experience of the world[1] the impression has not quite worn off. The comparison between women and firearms made me very cautious, and not until age began to creep over me did I see that this also was vanity, and that the Preacher was right when he said: "Go thy way, eat thy bread joyfully . . . with the woman whom thou lovest." My ideas upon this head outlived my ideas upon religion, and this is why I have enjoyed immunity from the opprobrium which I should not

[1] This passage was written at Ischia in 1875.

unreasonably have been subjected to if it could have been said that I left the seminary for other reasons than those derived from philology. The commonplace interrogation, "Where is the woman?" in which laymen invariably look for an explanation of all such cases cannot but seem a paltry attempt at humour to those who see things as they really are. My early days were passed in this high school of faith and of respect. The liberty in which so many giddy youths find themselves suddenly landed was in my case acquired very gradually; and I did not attain the degree of emancipation which so many Parisians reach without any effort of their own, until I had gone through the German exegesis. It took me six years of meditation and hard study to discover that my teachers were not infallible. What caused me more grief than anything else when I entered upon this new path was the thought of distressing my revered masters; but I am absolutely certain that I was right, and that the sorrow which they felt was the consequence of their narrow views as to the economy of the universe.

THE FLAX-CRUSHER

PART II.

THE education which these worthy priests gave me was not a very literary one. We turned out a good deal of Latin verse, but they would not recognize any French poetry later than the *Religion* of Racine the younger. The name of Lamartine was pronounced only with a sneer, and the existence of M. Hugo was not so much as known. To compose French verse was regarded as a very dangerous habit, and would have been sufficient to get a pupil expelled. I attribute partly to this my inability to express thoughts in rhyme, and this inability has often caused me great regret, for I have frequently felt a sort of inspiration to do so, but have invariably been checked by the association of ideas which has led me to regard versification as a defect. Our studies of history and of the natural sciences were not carried far, but, on the other hand, we went deep into mathematics, to which I applied myself with the utmost zest, these abstract

combinations exercising a wonderful fascination over me. Our professor, the good Abbé Duchesne, was particularly attentive in his lessons to me and to my close friend and fellow-student Guyomar, who displayed a great aptitude for this branch of study. We always returned together from the college. Our shortest cut was by the square, and we were too conscientious to deviate from the most direct route; but when we had had to work out some problem more intricate than usual our discussion of it lasted far beyond class-time, and on those occasions we made our way home by the hospital. This road took us past several large doors which were always shut, and upon which we worked out our calculations and drew our figures in chalk. Traces of them are perhaps visible there still, for these were the doors of large monasteries, where nothing ever changes.

The hospital-general, so called because it was the trysting-place alike of disease, old age, and poverty, was a very large structure, standing, like all old buildings, upon a good deal of ground, and having very little accommodation. Just in front of the entrance there was a small screen, where the inmates who were either well or recovering from illness used to meet when the weather was fine, for the hospital contained not only the sick, but the paupers, and even persons who paid a small sum for board and

lodging. At the first glimpse of sunshine they all came to sit out beneath the shade of the screen upon old cane chairs, and it was the most animated place in the town. Guyomar and myself always exchanged the time of day with these good people as we passed, and we were greeted with no little respect, for though young we were regarded as already clerks of the Church. This seemed quite natural, but there was one thing which excited our astonishment, though we were too inexperienced to know much of the world.

Among the paupers in the hospital was a person whom we never passed without surprise. This was an old maid of about five-and-forty, who always wore over her head a hood of the most singular shape; as a rule she was almost motionless, with a sombre and lost expression of countenance, and with her eyes glazed and hard-set. When we went by her countenance became animated, and she cast strange looks at us, sometimes tender and melancholy, sometimes hard and almost ferocious. If we looked back at her she seemed to be very much put out. We could not understand all this, but it had the effect of checking our conversation and any inclination to merriment. We were not exactly afraid of her, for though she was supposed to be out of her mind, the insane were not treated with the cruelty which has since been imported into the conduct of asylums. So far from being

sequestered they were allowed to wander about all day long. There is as a rule a good deal of insanity at Tréguier, for, like all dreamy races, which exhaust their mental energies in pursuit of the ideal, the Bretons of this district only too readily allow themselves to sink, when they are not supported by a powerful will, into a condition half way between intoxication and folly, and in many cases brought about by the unsatisfied aspirations of the heart. These harmless lunatics, whose insanity differed very much in degree, were looked upon as part and parcel of the town, and people spoke about "our lunatics" just as at Venice people say "*nostre carampane.*" One was constantly meeting them, and they passed the time of day with us and made some joke, at which, sickly as it was, we could not help smiling. They were treated with kindness, and they often did a service in their turn. I shall never forget a poor fellow called Brian, who believed that he was a priest, and who passed part of the day in church, going through the ceremonies of mass. There was a nasal drone to be heard in the cathedral every afternoon, and this was Brian reciting prayers which were doubtless not less acceptable than those of other people. The cathedral officials had the good sense not to interfere with him, and not to draw frivolous distinctions between the simple and the humble who came to kneel before their God.

The insane woman at the hospital was much less popular, on account of her taciturn ways. She never spoke to any one, and no one knew anything of her history. She never said a word to us boys, but her haggard and wild look made a deep and painful impression upon us. I have often thought since of this enigma, though without being able to decipher it ; but I obtained a clue to it eight years ago, when my mother, who had attained the age of eighty-five without loss of health, was overtaken by an illness which slowly undermined her strength.

My mother was in every respect, whether as regarded her ideas or her associations, one of the old school. She spoke Breton perfectly, and had at her fingers' ends all the sailors' proverbs and a host of things which no one now remembers. She was a true woman of the people, and her natural wit imparted a wonderful amount of life to the long stories which she told and which few but herself knew. Her sufferings did not in any way affect her spirits, and she was quite cheerful the afternoon of her death. Of an evening I used to sit with her for an hour in her room, with no other light—for she was very fond of this semi-obscurity—than that of the gas-lamp in the street. Her lively imagination would then assume free scope, and, as so often happens with old people, the recollections of her early days came back with

special force and clearness. She could remember what Tréguier and Lannion were before the Revolution, and she would describe what the different houses were like, and who lived in them. I encouraged her by questions to wander on, as it amused her and kept her thoughts away from her illness.

Upon one occasion we began to talk of the hospital, and she gave me the complete history of it. "Many changes," to use her own words, "have occurred there since I first knew it. No one need ever feel any shame at having been an inmate of it, for the most highly respected persons have resided there. During the First Empire, and before the indemnities were paid, it served as an asylum for the poor daughters of the nobles, who might be seen sitting out at the entrance upon cane chairs. Not a complaint ever escaped their lips, but when they saw the persons who had acquired possession of their family property rolling by in carriages, they would enter the chapel and engage in devotions so as not to meet them. This was done not so much to avoid regretting the loss of goods, of which they had made a willing sacrifice to God, as from a feeling of delicacy lest their presence might embarrass these *parvenus*. A few years later the parts were completely reversed, but the hospital still continued to receive all sorts of wreckage. It was there that your uncle, Pierre

Renan, who led a vagabond life, and passed all his time in taverns reading to the tipplers the books he borrowed from us, died; and old Système, whom the priests disliked though he was a very good man; and Gode, the old sorceress, who, the day after you were born, went to tell your fortune in the Lake of the Minihi; and Marguerite Calvez, who perjured herself and was struck down with consumption the very day she heard that St. Yves had been implored to bring about her death within the year."[1]

"And who," I asked her, "was that mad woman who used to sit under the screen, and of whom Guyomar and myself were so afraid?"

Reflecting a moment to remember whom I meant she replied, "Why, she was the daughter of the flax-crusher."

"Who was he?"

"I have never told you that story. It is too old-fashioned to be understood at the present day. Since I have come to Paris there are many things to which I have never alluded. . . These country nobles were so much respected. I always considered them to be the genuine noblemen. It would be no use telling this to the Parisians, they would only laugh at me. They think that their city is everything, and in my view they are very narrow-minded. People

[1] I may perhaps relate all these anecdotes at a future time.

have no idea in the present day how these old country noblemen were respected, poor as they were."

Here my mother paused for a little, and then went on with the story, which I will tell in her own words.

THE FLAX-CRUSHER

PART III.

"Do you remember the little village of Trédarzec, the steeple of which was visible from the turret of our house? About half a mile from the village, which consisted of little more than the church, the priest's house, and the mayor's office, stood the manor of Kermelle, which was, like so many others, a well-kept farmhouse, of very antiquated appearance, surrounded by a lofty wall, and grey with age. There was a large arched doorway, surmounted by a V-shaped shelter roofed with tiles, and at the side of this a smaller door for everyday use. At the further end of the courtyard stood the house with its pointed roof and its gables covered with ivy. The dovecote, a turret, and two or three well-constructed windows not unlike those of a church, proved that this was the residence of a noble, one of those old houses which were inhabited, previous to the Revolution, by a class of men whose habits and mode of life have now passed beyond the reach of imagination.

"These country nobles were mere peasants,[1] but the first of their class. At one time there was only one in each parish, and they were regarded as the representatives and mouthpieces of the inhabitants, who scrupulously respected their right and treated them with great consideration. But towards the close of the last century they were beginning to disappear very fast. The peasants looked upon them as being the lay heads of the parish just as the priest was the ecclesiastical head. He who held this position at Trédarzec of whom I am speaking, was an elderly man of fine presence, with all the force and vigour of youth, and a frank and open face; he wore his hair long, but rolled up under a comb, only letting it fall on Sunday, when he partook of the Sacrament. I can still see him—he often came to visit us at Tréguier—with his serious air and a tinge of melancholy, for he was almost the sole survivor of his order, the majority having disappeared altogether, while the others had come to live in towns. He was a universal favourite. He had a seat all to himself in church, and every Sunday he might be seen in it, just in front of the rest of the congregation, with his old-fashioned dress and his long gloves reaching almost to the elbow. When the Sacrament was about to be administered

[1] What grand *landweh* leaders they would have made! There are no such men in the present day.

he withdrew to the end of the choir, unfastened his hair, laid his gloves upon a small stool placed expressly for him near the rood screen, and walked up the aisle unassisted and erect. No one approached the table until he had returned to his seat and put on his gauntlets.

"He was very poor, but he made a point of concealing it from the public. These country nobles used to enjoy certain privileges which enabled them to live rather better than the general mass of peasants, but these gradually faded away, and Kermelle was in a very embarrassed condition. He could not well work in the fields, and he kept in doors all day, having an occupation which could be followed under cover. When flax has ripened, it is put through a process of decortication, which leaves only the textile fibre, and this was the work which poor old Kermelle thought that he could do without loss of dignity. No one saw him at it, and thus appearances were saved; but the fact was generally known, and as it was the custom to give every one a nickname he was soon known all the country over as 'the flax-crusher.' This sobriquet, as so often happens, gradually took the place of his proper name, and as 'the flax-crusher' he was soon generally known.

"He was like a patriarch of old, and you would laugh if I told you how the flax-crusher eked out his

subsistence, and added to the scanty wage which he received for this work. It was supposed that as head of the village he had special gifts of healing, and that by the laying on of his hands, and in other ways, he could cure many complaints. The popular belief was that this power was only possessed by those who had ever so many quarterings of nobility, and that he alone had the requisite number. On certain days his house was besieged by people who had come a distance of fifty miles. If a child was backward in learning to walk or was weak on its legs, the parents brought it to him. He moistened his fingers in his mouth and traced figures on the child's loins, the result being that it soon was able to walk. He was thoroughly in earnest, for these were the days of simple faith. Upon no account would he have taken any money, and for the matter of that the people who came to consult him were too poor to give him any, but one brought a dozen eggs, another a flitch of bacon, a third a jar of butter, or some fruit. He made no scruple about accepting these, and though the nobles in the towns ridiculed him, they were very wrong in doing so. He knew the country very well, and was the very incarnation and embodiment of it.

"At the outbreak of the Revolution he emigrated to Jersey, though why it is difficult to understand, for no one assuredly would have molested him, but the nobles of Tréguier told him that such was the king's

order, and he went off with the rest. He was not long away, and when he came back he found his old house, which had not been occupied, just as he had left it. When the indemnities were distributed some of his friends tried to persuade him to put in a claim ; and there was much, no doubt, which could have been said in support of it. But though the other nobles were anxious to improve his position, he would not hear of any such thing, his sole reply to all arguments being, 'I had nothing, and I could lose nothing.' He remained, therefore, as poor as ever.

" His wife died, I believe, while he was at Jersey, and he had a daughter who was born about the same time. She was a tall and handsome girl (you have only known her since she has lost her freshness), with much natural vigour, a beautiful complexion, and no lack of generous blood running through her veins. She ought to have been married young, but that was out of the question, for those wretched little starvelings of nobles in the small towns, who are good for nothing, and not to be compared with him, would not have heard of her for their sons. As a matter of etiquette she could not marry a peasant, and so the poor girl remained, as it were, in mid-air, like a wandering spirit. There was no place for her on earth. Her father was the last of his race, and it seemed as if she had been brought into the world with the destiny of not finding a place for

herself in it. Endowed with great physical beauty, she scarcely had any soul, and with her instinct was everything She would have made an excellent mother, but failing marriage a religious vocation would have suited her best, as the regular and austere mode of life would have calmed her temperament. But her father, doubtless, could not afford to provide her with a dowry, and his social condition forbade the idea of making her a lay-sister. Poor girl, driven into the wrong path, she was fated to meet her doom there. She was naturally upright and good, with a full knowledge of her duties, and her only fault was that she had blood in her veins. None of the young men in the village would have dreamt of taking a liberty with her, so much was her father respected. The feeling of her superiority prevented her from forming any acquaintance with the young peasants, and they never thought of paying their addresses to her. The poor girl lived, therefore, in a state of absolute solitude, for the only other inhabitant of the house was a lad of twelve or thirteen, a nephew, whom Kermelle had taken under his care and to whom the priest, a good man if ever there was one, taught what little Latin he knew himself.

"The Church was the only source of pleasure left for her. She was of a pious disposition, though not endowed with sufficient intelligence to understand anything of the mysteries of our religion. The priest,

very zealous in the performance of his duties, felt no little respect for the flax-crusher, and spent whatever leisure time he had at his house. He acted as tutor to the nephew, treating the daughter with the reserve which the clergy of Brittany make a point of showing in their intercourse with the opposite sex. He wished her good day and inquired after her health, but he never talked to her except on commonplace subjects. The unfortunate girl fell violently in love with him. He was the only person of her own station, so to speak, whom she ever saw, and moreover, he was a young man of very taking appearance; combining with an attitude of great outward modesty an air of subdued melancholy and resignation. One could see that he had a heart and strong feeling, but that a more lofty principle held them in subjection, or rather that they were transformed into something higher. You know how fascinating some of our Breton clergy are, and this is a fact very keenly appreciated by women. The unshaken attachment to a vow, which is in itself a sort of homage to their power, emboldens, attracts, and flatters them. The priest becomes for them a trusty brother who has for their sake renounced his sex and carnal delights. Hence is begotten a feeling which is a mixture of confidence, pity, regret, and gratitude. Allow priests to marry and you destroy one of the most necessary elements of Catholic society. Women will protest against such

a change, for there is something which they esteem even more than being loved, and that is for love to be made a serious business. Nothing flatters a woman more than to let her see that she is feared, and the Church by placing chastity in the first place among the duties of its ministers, touches the most sensitive chord of female vanity.

"The poor girl thus gradually became immersed in a deep love for the priest. The virtuous and mystic race to which she belonged knew nothing of the frenzy which overcomes all obstacles and which accounts nothing accomplished so long as anything remains to be accomplished. Her aspirations were very modest, and if he would only have admitted the fact of her existence she would have been content. She did not want so much as a look; a place in his thoughts would have been enough. The priest was, of course, her confessor, for there was no other in the parish. The mode of Catholic confession, so admirable in some respects, but so dangerous, had a great effect upon her imagination. It was inexpressibly pleasing to her to find herself every Saturday alone with him for half an hour, as if she were face to face with God, to see him discharging the functions of God, to feel his breath, to undergo the welcome humiliation of his reprimands, to confide to him her inmost thoughts, scruples, and fears. You must not imagine, however, that she told him everything, for a pious

woman has rarely the courage to make use of the confessional for a love confidence. She may perhaps give herself up to the enjoyment of sentiments which are not devoid of peril, but there is always a certain degree of mysticism about them which is not to be conciliated with anything so horrible as sacrilege. At all events, in this particular case, the girl was so shy that the words would have died upon her lips, and her passion was a silent, inward, and devouring fire. And with all this, she was compelled to see him every day and many times a day ; young and handsome, always following a dignified calling, officiating with the people on their knees before him, the judge and keeper of her own conscience. It was too much for her, and her head began to go. Her vigorous organization, deflected from its proper course, gave way, and her old father attributed to weakness of mind what was the result of the ravages wrought by the fantastic workings of a love-stricken heart.

" Just as a mountain stream is turned from its course by some insuperable barrier, the poor girl, with no means of making her affection known to the object of it, found consolation in very insignificant ways: to secure his notice for a moment, to be able to render him any slight service, and to fancy that she was of use to him was enough, and she may have said to herself, who can tell ? he is a man after all, and he may perhaps be touched in reality and only restrained

from showing that he is through discipline. All these efforts broke against a bar of iron, a wall of ice. The priest maintained the same cool reserve. She was the daughter of the man for whom he felt the greatest respect; but she was a woman. Oh! if he had avoided her, if he had treated her harshly, that would have been a triumph and a proof that she had made his heart beat for her, but there was something terrible about his unvarying politeness and his utter disregard of the most potent signs of affection. He made no attempt to keep her at a distance, but merely continued steadfastly to treat her as a mere abstraction.

"After the lapse of a certain time things got very bad. Rejected and heartbroken, she began to waste away, and her eye grew haggard, but she put a restraint upon herself, no one knew her secret! 'What,' she would say to herself, 'I cannot attract his notice for a moment; he will not even acknowledge my existence; do what I will, I can only be for him a shadow, a phantom, one soul among a hundred others. It would be too much to hope for his love, but his notice, a look from him . . . . To be the equal of one so learned, so near to God, is more than I could hope, and to bear him children would be sacrilege; but to be his, to be a Martha to him, to be his servant, discharging the modest duties of which I am capable, so as to have all in common with him, the household

goods and all that concerns a humble woman who is not initiated in any higher ideas, that would be heavenly!' She would remain motionless for whole afternoons upon her chair, nursing this idea. She could see him and picture herself with him, loading him with attentions, keeping his house, and pressing the hem of his garment. She thrust away these idle dreams from her but after having been plunged in them for hours she was deadly pale and oblivious of all those who were about her. Her father might have noticed it, but what could the poor old man do to cure an evil which it would be impossible for a simple soul like his so much as to conceive.

"So things went on for about a year. The probability is that the priest saw nothing, so firmly do our clergy adhere to the resolution of living in an atmosphere of their own. This only added fuel to the fire. Her love became a worship, a pure adoration, and so she gained comparative peace of mind. Her imagination took quite a childish turn, and she wanted to be able to fancy that she was employed in doing things for him. She had got to dream while awake, and, like a somnambulist, to perform acts in a semi-unconscious state. Day and night, one thought haunted her: she fancied herself tending him, counting his linen, and looking after all the details of his household, which were too petty to occupy his thoughts. All these fancies gradually took

shape, and led up to an act only to be explained by the mental state to which she had for some time been reduced."

What follows would indeed be incomprehensible without a knowledge of certain peculiarities in the Breton character. The most marked feature in the people of Brittany is their affection. Love is with them a tender, deep, and affectionate sentiment, rather than a passion. It is an inward delight which wears and consumes, differing *toto cælo* from the fiery passion of southern races.

The paradise of their dreams is cool and green, with no fierce heat. There is no race which yields so many victims to love; for, though suicide is rare, the gradual wasting away which is called consumption is very prevalent. It is often so with the young Breton conscripts. Incapable of finding any satisfaction in mercenary intrigues, they succumb to an indefinable sort of languor, which is called home-sickness, though, in reality, love with them is indissolubly associated with their native village, with its steeple and vesper bells, and with the familiar scenes of home. The hot-blooded southerner kills his rival, as he may the object of his passion. The sentiment of which I am speaking is fatal only to him who is possessed by it, and this is why the people of Brittany are so chaste a race. Their lively imagination creates an aerial world which satisfies their aspirations. The true poetry of such a love as

this is the sonnet on spring in the Song of Solomon, which is far more voluptuous than it is passionate. "Hiems transiit; imber abiit et recessit . . . . Vox turturis audita est in terra nostra . . . . Surge, amica mea, et veni."

THE FLAX-CRUSHER

PART IV.

My mother, resuming her story, went on to say :—

"We are all, as a matter of fact, at the mercy of our illusions, and the proof of this is that in many cases nothing is easier than to take in Nature by devices which she is unable to distinguish from the reality. I shall never forget the daughter of Marzin, the carpenter in the High Street, who, losing her senses owing to a suppression of the maternal sentiment, took a log of wood, dressed it up in rags, placed on the top of it a sort of baby's cap, and passed the day in fondling, rocking, hugging, and kissing this artificial infant. When it was placed in the cradle beside her of an evening, she was quiet all night. There are some instincts for which appearances suffice, and which can be kept quiet by fictions. Thus it was that Kermelle's daughter succeeded in giving reality to her dreams. Her ideal was a life in common with the man she loved, and the one which

she shared in fancy was not, of course, that of a priest, but the ordinary domestic life. She was meant for the conjugal existence, and her insanity was the result of an instinct for housekeeping being checkmated. She fancied that her aspiration was realized and that she was keeping house for the man whom she loved; and as she was scarcely capable of distinguishing between her dreams and the reality she was the victim of the most incredible aberrations, which prove in the most effectual way the sacred laws of nature and their inevitable fatality.

"She passed her time in hemming and marking linen, which, in her idea, was for the house where she was to pass her life at the feet of her adored one. The hallucination went so far that she marked the linen with the priest's initials; often with his and her own interlaced. She plied her needle with a very deft hand, and would work for hours at a stretch, absorbed in a delicious reverie. So she satisfied her cravings, and passed through moments of delight which kept her happy for days.

"Thus the weeks passed, while she traced the name so dear to her, and associated it with her own—this alone being a pastime which consoled her. Her hands were always busy in his service, and the linen which she had sewn for him seemed to be herself. It would be used and touched by him, and there was deep joy in the thought. She would be always

deprived of him, it was true, but the impossible must remain the impossible, and she would have drawn herself as near to him as could be. For a whole year she fed in fancy upon her pitiful little happiness. Alone, and with her eyes intent upon her work, she lived in another world, and believed herself to be his wife in a humble measure. The hours flowed on slowly like the motion of her needle; her hapless imagination was relieved. And then she at times indulged in a little hope. Perhaps he would be touched, even to tears, when he made the discovery, testifying to her great love. 'He will see how I love him, and he will understand how sweet it is to be brought together.' She would be wrapped for days at a time in these dreams, which were nearly always followed by a period of extreme prostration.

"In course of time the work was completed, and then came the question, 'What should she do with it?' The idea of compelling him to accept a service, to be under some sort of obligation to her, took complete possession of her mind. She determined to steal his gratitude, if I may so express myself; to compel him by force to feel obliged to her; and this was the plan she resolved upon. It was devoid of all sense or reason, but her mind was gone, and she had long since been led away by the vagaries of her disordered imagination. The festivals of Christmas were about to be celebrated. After the midnight mass

the priest was in the habit of entertaining the mayor and the notabilities of the village at supper. His house adjoined the church, and besides the principal door opening on to the village square, there were two others, one leading into the vestry and so into the church, and another into the garden and the fields beyond. Kermelle Manor was about five hundred yards distant, and to save the nephew—who took lessons from the priest—making a long round, he had been given a key of this back door. The daughter got possession of this key while the mass was being celebrated, and entered the house. The priest's servant had laid the cloth in advance, so as to be free to attend mass, and the poor daft girl hurriedly removed the tablecloth and napkins and hid them in the manor-house. When mass was over the theft was detected at once, and caused very great surprise, the first thing noticed being that the linen alone had been taken. The priest was unwilling to let his guests go away supperless, and while they were consulting as to what to do, the girl herself arrived, saying, 'You will not decline our good offices this time, Monsieur le Curé. You shall have our linen here in a few minutes.' Her father expressed himself in the same sense, and the priest could not but assent, little dreaming of what a trick had been played upon him by a person who was generally supposed to be so wanting in intelligence.

"This singular robbery was further investigated the next day. There was no sign of any force having been used to get into the house. The main door and the one leading into the garden were untouched and locked as usual. It never occurred to any one that the key intrusted to young Kermelle could have been used to commit the robbery. It followed, therefore, that the theft must have been committed by way of the vestry door. The clerk had been in the church all the time, but his wife had been in and out. She had been to the fire to get some coals for the censers, and had attended to two or three other little details; and so suspicion fell on her. She was a very respectable woman, and it seemed most improbable that she would be guilty of such an offence, but the appearances were dead against her. There was no getting away from the argument that the thief had entered by the vestry door, that she alone could have gone through this door, and that, as she herself admits, she did go through it. The far too prevalent idea of those days was that every offence must be followed by an arrest. This gave a very high idea of the extraordinary sagacity of justice, of its prompt perspicacity, and of the rapidity with which it tracked out crime. The unfortunate woman was walked off between two gendarmes. The effect produced by the gendarmes, with their burnished arms and imposing cross-belts, when they made their appearance in a

village, was very great. All the spectators were in tears; the prisoner alone retained her composure, and told them all that she was convinced her innocence would be made clear.

"As a matter of fact, within forty-eight hours it was seen that a blunder had been committed. Upon the third day, the villagers hardly ventured to speak to one another on the subject, for they all of them had the same idea in their heads, though they did not like to give utterance to it. The idea seemed to them not less absurd than it was self-evident, viz., that the flax-crusher's key must have been used for the robbery. The priest remained within doors so as to avoid having to give utterance to the suspicion which obtruded itself upon him. He had not as yet examined very closely the linen which had been sent from the manor in place of his own. His eyes happened to fall upon the initials, and he was too surprised to understand the mysterious allusion of the two letters, being unable to follow the strange hallucinations of an unhappy lunatic.

"While he was immersed in melancholy reflection, the flax-crusher entered the room, with his figure as upright as ever but pale as death. The old man stood up in front of the priest and burst into tears, exclaiming: 'It is my miserable girl. I ought to have kept a closer watch over her and have found out what her thoughts were about, but with her constant

melancholy she gave me the slip.' He then revealed the secret, and within an hour the stolen linen was brought back to the priest's house. The delinquent had hoped that the scandal would soon be forgotten, and that she would revel in peace over the success of her little plot, but the arrest of the clerk's wife and the sensation which it caused spoilt the whole thing. If her moral sense had not been entirely obliterated, her first thought would have been to get the clerk's wife set at liberty, but she paid little or no heed to that. She was plunged in a kind of stupor which had nothing in common with remorse, and what so prostrated her was the evident failure of her attempt to move the feelings of the priest. Most men would have been touched by the revelation of so ardent a passion, but the priest was unmoved. He banished all thought of this remarkable event from his mind, and when he was fully convinced of the imprisoned woman's innocence he went to sleep, celebrated mass the next morning, and recited his breviary just as if nothing had happened.

"That a blunder had been committed in arresting this woman then became painfully evident, as but for this the matter might have been hushed up. There had been no actual robbery, but after an innocent woman had been several days in prison on the charge of theft, it was very difficult to let the real culprit go unpunished. Her insanity was not self-evident, and it

may even be said that there were no outward signs of it. Up to that time it had never occurred to any one that she was insane, for there was nothing singular in her conduct except her extreme taciturnity. It was easy, therefore, to question her insanity, while the true explanation of the act was so incredible and so strange that her friends could not well bring it forward. The fact of having allowed the clerk's wife to be arrested was inexcusable. If the taking of the linen had only been a joke, the perpetrator ought to have brought it to an end when a third person was made a victim of it. She was arrested and taken to St. Brieuc for the assizes. Her prostration was so complete that she seemed to be out of the world. Her dream was over, and the fancy upon which she had fed and which had sustained her for a time had fled. She was not in the least violent but so dejected that when the medical men examined her they at once saw what was the true state of the case.

"The case was soon disposed of in court. She would not reply a word to the examining judge. The flax-crusher came into court erect and self-possessed as usual, with a look of resignation on his face. He came up to the bar of the witness-box and deposited upon the ledge his gloves, his cross of St. Louis, and his scarf. 'Gentlemen of the jury,' he said, 'I can only put these on again if you tell me

to do so; my honour is in your hands. She is the culprit, but she is not a thief. She is ill.' The poor fellow burst into tears, and his utterance was choked with them. There was a general murmur of 'Don't carry it any further.' The counsel for the Crown had the tact not to enter upon a dissertation as to a singular case of amorous physiology and abandoned the prosecution.

"The jury, all of whom were in tears, did not take long to deliberate. When the verdict of acquittal was recorded the flax-crusher put on his decorations again and left the court as quickly as possible, taking his daughter back with him to the village at nightfall.

"The scandal was such a public one that the priest could not fail to learn the truth in respect to many matters which he had endeavoured to ignore. This, however, did not affect him, and he did not ask the bishop to remove him to another parish, nor did the bishop suggest any change. It might be thought that he must have felt some embarrassment the first time that he met Kermelle and his daughter. But such was not the case. He went to the manor at an hour when he knew that he would find Kermelle and his daughter at home, and addressing himself to the latter he said: 'You have been guilty of a great sin, not so much by your folly, for which God will forgive you, but in allowing one of the best of

women to be sent to gaol. An innocent woman has, by your misconduct, been treated for several days as a thief, and carried off to prison by gendarmes in the sight of the whole parish. You owe her some sort of reparation. On Sunday, the clerk's wife will be seated as usual in the last row, near the church-door ; at the Belief, you will go and fetch her and lead her by the hand to your seat of honour, which she is better worthy to occupy than you are."

The poor creature did mechanically what she was bid, and she had ceased to be a sentient being. From this time forth, little was ever seen of the flax-crusher and his family. The manor had become, as it were, a tomb, from which issued no sign of life.

The clerk's wife was the first to die. The emotion had been too much for this simple soul. She had never doubted the goodness of Providence, but the whole business had upset her, and she gradually grew weaker. She was a saintly woman, with the most exquisite sentiment of devotion for the Church. This would scarcely be understood now in Paris, where the church, as a building, goes for so little. One Saturday evening, she felt her end approaching, and her joy was great. She sent for the priest, her mind full of a long-cherished project, which was that during high mass on Sunday her body should be laid upon the trestles which are used for the coffins. It would be

joy indeed to hear mass once again, even in death, to listen to those words of consolation and those hymns of salvation; to be present there beneath the funeral pall, amid the assembled congregation, the family which she had so dearly loved, to hear them all, herself unseen, while all their thoughts and prayers were for her, to hold communion once again with these pious souls before being laid in the earth. Her prayer was granted, and the priest pronounced a very edifying discourse over her grave.

"The old man lived on for several years, dying inch by inch, secluded in his house, and never conversing with the priest. He attended church, but did not occupy his front seat. He was so strong that his agony lasted eight or ten years.

"His walks were confined to the avenue of tall lime-trees which skirted the manor. While pacing up and down there one day, he saw something strange upon the horizon. It was the tricolour flag floating from the steeple of Tréguier; the Revolution of 1830 had just been effected. When he learnt that the king was an exile, he saw only too well that he had been bearing his part in the closing scenes of a world. The professional duty to which he had sacrificed everything ceased to have any object. He did not regret having formed too high an idea of duty, and it never occurred to him that he might have grown rich as others had done; but he lost faith in all save God.

The Carlists of Tréguier went about declaring that the new order of things would not last, and that the rightful king would soon return. He only smiled at these foolish predictions, and died soon afterwards, assisted in his last moments by the priest, who expounded to him that beautiful passage in the burial service: 'Be not like the heathen, who are without hope.'

"After his death his daughter was totally unprovided for, and arrangements were made for placing her in the hospital where you saw her. No doubt she, too, is dead ere this, and another sleeps in her bed at the hospital."

PRAYER ON THE ACROPOLIS

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It was not until I was well advanced in life that I began to have any souvenirs. The imperious necessity which compelled me during my early years to solve for myself, not with the leisurely deliberation of the thinker, but with the feverish ardour of one who has to struggle for life, the loftiest problems of philosophy and religion never left me a quarter of an hour's leisure to look behind me. Afterwards dragged into the current of the century in which I lived, and concerning which I was in complete ignorance, there was suddenly disclosed to my gaze a spectacle as novel to me as the society of Saturn or Venus would be to any one landed in those planets. It struck me as being paltry and morally inferior to what I had seen at Issy and St. Sulpice; though the great scientific and critical attainments of men like Eugène Burnouf, the brilliant conversation of M. Cousin, and the revival brought about by Germany in nearly all the historical sciences, coupled with my travels and the fever of production, carried

me away and prevented me from meditating on the years which were already relegated to what seemed like a distant past. My residence in Syria tended still further to obliterate my early recollections. The new sensations which I experienced there, the glimpses which I caught of a divine world, so different from our frigid and sombre countries, absorbed my whole being. My dreams were haunted for a time by the burnt-up mountain-chain of Galaad and the peak of Safed, where the Messiah was to appear, by Carmel and its beds of anemone sown by God, by the Gulf of Aphaca whence issues the river Adonis. Strangely enough, it was at Athens, in 1865, that I first felt a strong backward impulse, the effect being that of a fresh and bracing breeze coming from afar.

The impression which Athens made upon me was the strongest which I have ever felt. There is one and only one place in which perfection exists, and that is Athens, which outdid anything I had ever imagined. I had before my eyes the ideal of beauty crystallised in the marble of Pentelicus. I had hitherto thought that perfection was not to be found in this world ; one thing alone seemed to come anywhere near to perfection. For some time past I had ceased to believe in miracles strictly so called, though the singular destiny of the Jewish people, leading up to Jesus and Christianity, appeared to me to stand alone. And now suddenly there arose by the

side of the Jewish miracle the Greek miracle, a thing which has only existed once, which had never been seen before, which will never be seen again, but the effect of which will last for ever, an eternal type of beauty, without a single blemish, local or national. I of course knew before I went there that Greece had created science, art, and philosophy, but the means of measurement were wanting. The sight of the Acropolis was like a revelation of the Divine, such as that which I experienced when, gazing down upon the valley of the Jordan from the heights of Casyoun, I first felt the living reality of the Gospel. The whole world then appeared to me barbarian. The East repelled me by its pomp, its ostentation, and its impostures. The Romans were merely rough soldiers ; the majesty of the noblest Roman of them all, of an Augustus and a Trajan, was but attitudinising compared to the ease and simple nobility of these proud and peaceful citizens. Celts, Germans, and Slavs appeared as conscientious but scarcely civilised Scythians. Our own Middle Ages seemed to me devoid of elegance and style, disfigured by misplaced pride and pedantry, Charlemagne was nothing more than an awkward German stableman ; our chevaliers louts at whom Themistocles and Alcibiades would have laughed. But here you had a whole people of aristocrats, a general public composed entirely of connoisseurs, a democracy

which was capable of distinguishing shades of art so delicate that even our most refined judges can scarcely appreciate them. Here you had a public capable of understanding in what consisted the beauty of the Propylon and the superiority of the sculptures of the Parthenon. This revelation of true and simple grandeur went to my very soul. All that I had hitherto seen seemed to me the awkward effort of a Jesuitical art, a rococo mixture of silly pomp, charlatanism, and caricature.

These sentiments were stronger as I stood on the Acropolis than anywhere else. An excellent architect with whom I had travelled would often remark that to his mind the truth of the gods was in proportion to the solid beauty of the temples reared in their honour. Judged by this standard, Athens would have no rival. What adds so much to the beauty of the buildings is their absolute honesty and the respect shown to the Divinity. The parts of the building not seen by the public are as well constructed as those which meet the eye ; and there are none of those deceptions which, in French churches more particularly, give the idea of being intended to mislead the Divinity as to the value of the offering. The aspect of rectitude and seriousness which I had before me caused me to blush at the thought of having often done sacrifice to a less pure ideal. The hours which I passed on the sacred eminence were hours of prayer.

My whole life unfolded itself, as in a general confession, before my eyes. But the most singular thing was that in confessing my sins I got to like them, and my resolve to become classical eventually drove me into just the opposite direction. An old document which I have lighted upon among my memoranda of travel contains the following :—

Prayer which I said on the Acropolis when I had succeeded in understanding the perfect beauty of it.

"Oh! nobility! Oh! true and simple beauty! Goddess, the worship of whom signifies reason and wisdom, thou whose temple is an eternal lesson of conscience and truth, I come late to the threshold of thy mysteries ; I bring to the foot of thy altar much remorse. Ere finding thee, I have had to make infinite search. The initiation which thou didst confer by a smile upon the Athenian at his birth I have acquired by force of reflection and long labour.

"I am born, O goddess of the blue eyes, of barbarian parents, among the good and virtuous Cimmerians who dwell by the shore of a melancholy sea, bristling with rocks ever lashed by the storm. The sun is scarcely known in this country, its flowers are seaweed, marine plants, and the coloured shells which are gathered in the recesses of lonely bays. The clouds seem colourless, and even joy is rather sorrowful there ; but fountains of fresh water spring

out of the rocks, and the eyes of the young girls are like the green fountains in which, with their beds of waving herbs, the sky is mirrored.

"My forefathers, as far as we can trace them, have passed their lives in navigating the distant seas, which thy Argonauts knew not. I used to hear as a child the songs which told of voyages to the Pole; I was cradled amid the souvenir of floating ice, of misty seas like milk, of islands peopled with birds which now and again would warble, and which, when they rose in flight, darkened the air.

"Priests of a strange creed, handed down from the Syrians of Palestine, brought me up. These priests were wise and good. They taught me long lessons of Cronos, who created the world, and of his son, who, as they told me, made a journey upon earth. Their temples are thrice as lofty as thine, O Eurhythmia, and dense like forests. But they are not enduring, and crumble to pieces at the end of five or six hundred years. They are the fantastic creation of barbarians, who vainly imagine that they can succeed without observing the rules which thou hast laid down, O Reason! Yet these temples pleased me, for I had not then studied thy divine art and God was present to me in them. Hymns were sung there, and among those which I can remember were: 'Hail, star of the sea . . . . . Queen of those who mourn in this valley of tears . . . . .' or again,

'Mystical rose, tower of ivory, house of gold, star of the morning . . . . .' Yes, Goddess, when I recall these hymns of praise my heart melts, and I become almost an apostate. Forgive me this absurdity ; thou canst not imagine the charm which these barbarians have imparted to verse, and how hard it is to follow the path of pure reason.

"And if thou knewest how difficult it has become to serve thee. All nobility has disappeared. The Scythians have conquered the world. There is no longer a Republic of free citizens ; the world is governed by kings whose blood scarcely courses in their veins, and at whose majesty thou wouldst smile. Heavy hyperboreans denounce thy servants as frivolous. . . . . A formidable *Panbœotia*, a league of fools, weighs down upon the world with a pall of lead. Thou must fain despise even those who pay thee worship. Dost thou remember the Caledonian who half a century ago broke up thy temple with a hammer to carry it away with him to Thulé? He is no worse than the rest. . . . . I wrote in accordance with some of the rules which thou lovest, O Théonoé, the life of the young god whom I served in my childhood, and for this they beat me like a Euhemerus and wonder what my motives can be, believing only in those things which enrich their trapezite tables. And why do we write the lives of the gods if it is not to make the reader love what is divine in them, and to

show that this divine past yet lives and will ever live in the heart of humanity?

"Dost thou remember the day when, Dionysodorus being archon, an ugly little Jew, speaking the Greek of the Syrians, came hither, passed beneath thy porch without understanding thee, misread thy inscriptions, and imagined that he had discovered within thy walls an altar dedicated to what he called the Unknown God? Well, this little Jew was believed; for a thousand years thou hast been treated as an idol, O Truth! for a thousand years the world has been a desert in which no flower bloomed. And all this time thou wert silent, O Salpinx, clarion of thought. Goddess of order, image of celestial stability, those who loved thee were regarded as culprits, and now, when by force of conscientious labour we have succeeded in drawing near to thee, we are accused of committing a crime against human intelligence because we have burst the chains which Plato knew not.

"Thou alone art young, O Cora; thou alone art pure, O Virgin; thou alone art healthy, O Hygeia; thou alone art strong, O Victory! Thou keepest the cities, O Promachos; thou hast the blood of Mars in thee, O Area; peace is thy aim, O Pacifica! O Legislatress, source of just constitutions; O Democracy,[1] thou whose fundamental dogma it is that all good things come from the people, and that where there is

[1] ΑΘΗΝΑΣ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑΣ, Le Bas. I. 32nd Inscrip.

no people to fertilise and inspire genius there can be none, teach us to extricate the diamond from among the impure multitudes! Providence of Jupiter, divine worker, mother of all industry, protectress of labour, O Ergane, thou who ennoblest the labour of the civilised worker and placest him so far above the slothful Scythian; Wisdom, thou whom Jupiter begot with a breath; thou who dwellest within thy father, a part of his very essence; thou who art his companion and his conscience; Energy of Zeus, spark which kindles and keeps aflame the fire in heroes and men of genius, make us perfect spiritualists! On the day when the Athenians and the men of Rhodes fought for the sacrifice, thou didst choose to dwell among the Athenians as being the wisest. But thy father caused Plutus to descend in a shower of gold upon the city of the Rhodians because they had done homage to his daughter. The men of Rhodes were rich, but the Athenians had wit, that is to say, the true joy, the ever-enduring good humour, the divine youth of the heart.

"The only way of salvation for the world is by returning to thy allegiance, by repudiating its barbarian ties. Let us hasten into thy courts. Glorious will be the day when all the cities which have stolen the fragments of thy temple, Venice, Paris, London, and Copenhagen, shall make good their larceny, form holy alliances to bring these

fragments back, saying: 'Pardon us, O Goddess, it was done to save them from the evil genii of the night,' and rebuild thy walls to the sound of the flute, thus expiating the crime of Lysander the infamous! Thence they shall go to Sparta and curse the site where stood that city, mistress of sombre errors, and insult her because she is no more. Firm in my faith, I shall have force to withstand my evil counsellors, my scepticism, which leads me to doubt of the people, my restless spirit which, after truth has been brought to light, impels me to go on searching for it, and my fancy which cannot be still even when Reason has pronounced her judgment. O Archegetes, ideal which the man of genius embodies in his masterpieces, I would rather be last in thy house than first in any other. Yes, I will cling to the stylobate of thy temple, I will be a stylites on thy columns, my cell shall be upon thy architrave and, what is more difficult still, for thy sake I will endeavour to be intolerant and prejudiced. I will love thee alone. I will learn thy tongue, and unlearn all others. I will be unjust for all that concerns not thee; I will be the servant of the least of thy children. I will exalt and flatter the present inhabitants of the earth which thou gavest to Erechthea. I will endeavour to like their very defects; I will endeavour to persuade myself, O Hippia, that they are descendants of the horsemen

who, aloft upon the marble of thy frieze celebrate without ceasing their glad festival. I will pluck out of my heart every fibre which is not reason and pure art. I will try to love my bodily ills, to find delight in the flush of fever. Help me! Further my resolutions, O Salutaris! Help, thou who savest!

"Great are the difficulties which I foresee. Inveterate the habits of mind which I shall have to change. Many the delightful recollections which I shall have to pluck out of my heart. I will try, but I am not very confident of my power. Late in life have I known thee, O perfect Beauty. I shall be beset with hesitations and temptation to fall away. A philosophy, perverse no doubt in its teachings, has led me to believe that good and evil, pleasure and pain, the beautiful and the ungainly, reason and folly, fade into one another by shades as impalpable as those in a dove's neck. To feel neither absolute love nor absolute hate becomes therefore wisdom. If any one society, philosophy, or religion, had possessed absolute truth, this society, philosophy, or religion, would have vanquished all the others and would be the only one now extant. All those who have hitherto believed themselves to be right were in error, as we see very clearly. Can we without utter presumption believe that the future will not judge us as we have judged the past? Such are the blasphemous ideas suggested to me by

my corrupt mind. A literature wholesome in all respects like thine would now be looked upon as wearisome.

"Thou smilest at my simplicity. Yes, weariness. We are corrupt; what is to be done? I will go further, O orthodox Goddess, and confide to you the inmost depravation of my heart. Reason and common sense are not all-satisfying. There is poetry in the frozen Strymon and in the intoxication of the Thracian. The time will come when thy disciples will be regarded as the disciples of *ennui*. The world is greater than thou dost suppose. If thou hadst seen the Polar snows and the mysteries of the austral firmament thy forehead, O Goddess, ever so calm, would be less serene; thy head would be larger and would embrace more varied kinds of beauty.

"Thou art true, pure, perfect; thy marble is spotless; but the temple of Hagia-Sophia, which is at Byzantium, also produces a divine effect with its bricks and its plaster-work. It is the image of the vault of heaven. It will crumble, but if thy chapel had to be large enough to hold a large number of worshippers it would crumble also.

"A vast stream called Oblivion hurries us downward towards a nameless abyss. Thou art the only true God, O Abyss! the tears of all nations are true tears; the dreams of all wise men comprise a parcel of truth; all things here below are mere symbols and

dreams. The Gods pass away like men; and it would not be well for them to be eternal. The faith which we have felt should never be a chain, and our obligations to it are fully discharged when we have carefully enveloped it in the purple shroud within the folds of which slumber the Gods that are dead."

ST RENAN

ST RENAN

WHEN I come to look at things very closely, I see that I have changed very little; my destiny had practically welded me, from my earliest youth, to the place which I was to hold in the world. My vocation was thoroughly matured when I came to Paris; before leaving Brittany my life had been mapped out. By the mere force of things, and despite my conscientious efforts to the contrary, I was predestined to become what I am, a member of the romantic school, protesting against romanticism, a Utopian inculcating the doctrine of half-measures, an idealist unsuccessfully attempting to pass muster for a Philistine, a tissue of contradictions, resembling the double-natured *hircocerf* of scholasticism. One of my two halves must have been busy demolishing the other half, like the fabled beast of Ctesias which unwittingly devoured its own paws. As was well said by that keen observer, Challemel-Lacour: "He thinks like a man, feels like a woman, and acts like a

child." I have no reason to complain of such being the case, as this moral constitution has procured for me the keenest intellectual joys which man can taste.

My race, my family, my native place, and the peculiar circle in which I was brought up, by diverting me from all material pursuits, and by rendering me unfit for anything except the treatment of things of the mind, had made of me an idealist, shut out from everything else. The application of my intellect might have been a different one, but the principle would have remained the same. The true sign of a vocation is the impossibility of getting away from it: that is to say, of succeeding in anything except that for which one was created. The man who has a vocation mechanically sacrifices everything to his dominant task. External circumstances might, as so often happens, have checked the cause of my life and prevented me from following my natural bent, but my utter incapability of succeeding in anything else would have been the protest of baffled duty, and Predestination would in one way have been triumphant by proving the subject of the experiment to be powerless outside the kind of labour for which she had selected him. I should have succeeded in any variety of intellectual application; I should have failed miserably in any calling which involved the pursuit of material interests.

The characteristic feature of all degrees of the Breton race is its idealism—the endeavour to attain a moral and intellectual aim, which is often erroneous but always disinterested. There never was a race of men less suited for industry and trade. They can be got to do anything by putting them upon their honour; but material gain is deemed unworthy of a man of spirit, the noblest occupations being those which bring no profit, as of the soldier, the sailor, the priest, the true gentleman who derives from his land no more than the amount sanctioned by long tradition, the magistrate and the thinker. These ideas are based upon the theory, an incorrect one perhaps, that wealth is only to be acquired by taking advantage of others, and grinding down the poor. The outcome of these views is that the man of wealth is not thought nearly so much of as he who devotes himself to the public welfare, or who represents the views of the district. The people have no patience with the idea, very prevalent among self-made men, that their accumulation of wealth confers a benefit upon the community. When in former times they were told that "the king sets great value upon the Bretons," they were content, and in his abundance they felt themselves rich. Being convinced that money gained must be taken from some one else, they despised greed. A like idea of political economy is very old-fashioned, but human opinion will perhaps

come back to it some day. In the meanwhile, let me claim immunity for these few survivors of another world, in which this harmless error has kept alive the tradition of self-sacrifice. Do not improve their worldly lot, for they would be none the happier ; do not add to their wealth, for they would be less unselfish ; do not drive them into the primary schools, for they would perhaps lose some of their good qualities without acquiring those which culture bestows ; but do not despise them. Contempt is the one thing which tells upon those of simple nature ; it either shakes their faith in what is right or makes them doubt whether the better classes are good judges upon this point.

This disposition, for which I can find no better name than moral romanticism, was inherent in me from my birth, and in some measure by descent. I had, so Gode, the old sorceress, often told me, been touched by some fairy's wand before my birth. I came into the world before my time, and was so weak for two months that they did not think I should live. Gode informed my mother that she had an infallible way of ascertaining my fate. She went one morning with one of the little shifts which I wore to the sacred lake, and returned in high glee, exclaiming : "He means to live ! No sooner had I thrown the little shift on to the surface than it lifted itself up." In later years she used often to say to me with much

animation of feature: "Ah! if you had seen how the two arms stretched themselves out." The fairies were attached to me from my childhood, and I was very fond of them. You must not laugh at us Celts. We shall never build a Parthenon, for we have not the marble; but we are skilled in reading the heart and soul; we have a secret of our own for inserting the probe; we bury our hands in the entrails of a man, and, like the witches in *Macbeth*, withdraw them full of the secrets of infinity. The great secret of our art is that we can make our very failing appear attractive. The Breton race has in its heart an everlasting source of folly. The "fairy kingdom," which is the most beautiful on earth, is its true domain. The Breton race alone can comply with the strange conditions exacted by the fairy Gloriande from all who seek to enter her realm; the horn which will give no sound except when touched by lips that are pure, the magic cup which is filled only for the faithful lover, are our special appurtenances.

Religion is the form behind which the Celtic races disguise their love of the ideal, but it would be a mistake to imagine that religion is to them a tie or a servitude. No race has a greater independence of sentiment in religion. It was not until the twelfth century, and owing to the support which the Normans of France gave to the See of Rome, that Breton Christianity was unmistakably brought into

the current of Catholicism. It would have taken very little for the Bretons of France to have become Protestant like their brethren the Welsh in England. In the seventeenth century French Brittany was completely permeated by Jesuitical customs and by the modes of piety common to the rest of the world. Up to that time the religion of the country had had features of its own, its special characteristic being the worship of saints. Among the many peculiarities for which Brittany is noteworthy, its local hagiography is assuredly the most remarkable. Going through the country on foot there is one thing which immediately strikes the observer. The parish churches, in which the Sunday services are held, do not differ in the main from those of other countries. But in country districts it is no uncommon thing to find as many as ten or fifteen chapels in a single parish, most of them little huts with a single door and window, and dedicated to some saint unknown to the rest of Christendom. These local saints, who are to be counted by the hundred, all date from the fifth or the sixth century ; that is to say from the period of the emigration. Most of them are persons who have really existed, but who have been wrapped by tradition in a very brilliant network of fable. These fables, which are of the most primitive simplicity, and form a complete treasure of Celtic mythology and popular fancies,

have never been reduced to writing in their entirety. The instructive compilations made by the Benedictines and the Jesuits, even the candid and curious work of Albert Legrand, a Dominican of Morlaix, reproduce but a very small fraction of them. So far from encouraging these antique forms of popular worship, the clergy only just tolerate them, and would suppress them altogether if they could, feeling that they are the survivals of another and a much less orthodox age. They consent to say mass once a year in these chapels, as the saints to whom they are dedicated have too great a hold in the country to be dislodged, but they say nothing about them in the parish church. The clergy let the people visit these little sanctuaries of the antique rite, to seek in them the cure for certain complaints, and to worship there after their own way; they pretend to be blind to all this. Where, then, it may be asked, lies concealed the treasure of all these old stories? Why, in the memory of the people? Go from chapel to chapel, get the good people who attend them into conversation, and if they think they can trust you they will tell you with a mixture of seriousness and pleasantry wonderful stories, from which comparative mythology and history will one day reap a rich harvest.[1]

[1] A conscientious and painstaking student, M. Luzel, will, I hope, be the Pausanias of these little local chapels, and will commit to writing the whole of this magnificent legend, which is upon the point of being lost.

These stories had from the first a very great influence upon my imagination. The chapels which I have spoken of are always solitary, and stand by themselves amid the desolate moors or barren rocks. The wind whistling amid the heather and the stunted vegetation thrilled me with terror, and I often used to take to my heels, thinking that the spirits of the past were pursuing me. At other times I would look through the half ruined door of the chapel at the stained glass or the statuettes of painted wood which stood on the altar. These plunged me in endless reveries. The strange and terrible physiognomy of these saints, more Druid than Christian, savage and vindictive, pursued me like a nightmare. Saints though they were, they were none the less subject to very strange weaknesses. Gregory, of Tours, has told us the story of a certain Winnoch, who passed through Tours on his way to Jerusalem, his only covering being some sheep skins with their wool taken off. He seemed so pious that they kept him there and made a priest of him. He made wild herbs his sole food, and raised the wine flagon to his lips in such a way that it seemed as if he scarcely moistened his lips. But as the liberality of the devout provided him with large quantities of it he got into the habit of drinking, and was several times observed to be overcome by his potations. The devil gained such a hold over him that, armed with

knives, sticks, stones, and whatever else he could get hold of, he ran after the people in the streets. It was found necessary to chain him up in his cell. None the less was he a saint. St. Cadoc, St. Iltud, St. Conery, St. Renan (or Ronan), appeared to me as giants. In after years, when I had come to know India, I saw that my saints were true *Richis*, and that through them I had became familiarised with the most primitive features of our Aryan world, with the idea of solitary masters of nature, asserting their power over it by asceticism and the force of the will.

The last of the saints whom I have mentioned naturally attracted my attention more than any of the others, as his name was the same as that by which I was known.[1] There is not a more original figure among all the saints of Brittany. The story of his life has been told to me two or three times, and each time with more extraordinary details. He lived in Cornwall, near the little town which bears his name (St. Renan). He was more a spirit of the earth than a saint, and his power over the elements was illimitable. He was of a violent and rather erratic temperament, and there was no telling beforehand as to what he would do. He was much

[1] The ancient form of the word is Ronan, which is still to be found in the names of places, *Loc Ronan*, the well of St. Ronan (Wales).

respected, but his stubborn resolve to take in all things his own course caused him to be regarded with no little fear, and when he was found one day lying dead on the floor of his hut there was a feeling of consternation in the country. The first person who, when looking in at the window as he went by, saw him in this position, took to his heels. He had been so self-willed and peculiar in his lifetime that no one ventured to guess as to how he might wish to have his body disposed of. It was feared that if his wishes were incorrectly interpreted, he would punish them by sending the plague, or having the town swallowed up by an earthquake, or by converting the country around into a marsh. Nor would it be wise to take his body to the parish church, as he had sometimes shown an aversion to it.

He might, perhaps, create a scandal. All the principal inhabitants were assembled in the cell, with his stark black corpse in their midst, when one of them made the following sensible suggestion: "We never could understand him when he was alive; it was easier to trace the flight of the swallow than to guess at his thoughts. Now that he is dead, let him still follow his own fancy We will cut down a few trees, make a waggon of them and harness four oxen to it. Then he can let them take him to the place where he wishes to be buried." This was done, and the body of the saint deposited on

the vehicle. The oxen, guided by the invisible hand of Ronan, went in a straight line into the thick of the forest, the trees bent or broke beneath their steps with an awful crackling sound. The waggon stopped in the centre of the forest, just where the largest of the oaks reared their head. The hint was taken and the saint was buried there and a church erected to his memory.

Tales of this kind inspired me early in life with a love of mythology. The simplicity of spirit with which they were accepted carried one back to the early ages of the world. Take for instance the way in which, as I was taught to believe, my father was cured of fever when a child. Before daybreak he was taken to the chapel of the saint who exercised the healing power. A blacksmith arrived at the same time with his forge, nails, and tongs. He lighted his fire, made his tongs red hot, and held them before the face of the saint, threatening to shoe him as he would a horse unless he cured the child of his fever. The threat took immediate effect, and my father was cured. Wood-carving has long been in great favour in Brittany. The statues of these saints are extraordinarily life-like, and in the eyes of people of vivid imagination they may well seem to be actually alive. I remember in particular one good man, who was not more daft than the rest, who always made off to the churches in the evening when he got

the chance. The next morning, he was invariably found in the building, half dead with fatigue. He had spent the whole night in detaching the figures of Christ from the crosses and drawing the arrows out of the bodies of St. Sebastian.

My mother, who was a Gascon on one side (her father was a native of Bordeaux), told these anecdotes with much wit and tact, passing deftly between what was real and what was fanciful, so as to leave the impression that these things were only true from an ideal point of view. She clung to these fables as a Breton; as a Gascon she was inclined to laugh at them, and this was the secret of the sprightliness and gaiety of her life. This state of things has been the means of giving me what little talent I may have for historical studies. I have derived from it a kind of habit of looking below the surface and hearing sounds which other ears do not catch. The essence of criticism is to be able to realise conditions different from those under which we are now living. I have been in actual contact with the primitive ages. The most remote past was still in existence in Brittany up to 1830. The world of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries passed daily before the eyes of those who lived in the towns. The epoch of the Welsh emigration (the fifth and the sixth centuries) was plainly visible in the country to the practised eye. Paganism was still to be detected

beneath a layer, often so thin as to be transparent, of Christianity, and with the former were mixed up traces of a still more ancient world which I afterwards came upon again among the Laplanders. When visiting in 1870, with Prince Napoleon, the huts of a Laplander encampment near Tromsoe, I felt some of my earliest recollections live again in the features of several women and children and in certain customs and traits of character. It occurred to me that in ancient times there might have been admixtures between the lost branches of the Celtic race and races like the Laplanders which covered the soil upon their arrival. My ethnical position would in this case be: "A Celt crossed with Gascon with a slight infusion of Laplander blood." Such a condition of things ought, if I am not mistaken, according to the theories of the anthropologists, to represent the maximum of idiocy and imbecility; but the decrees of anthropology are only relative: what it treats as stupidity among the ancient races of men is often neither more nor less than an extraordinary force of enthusiasm and intuition.

MY UNCLE PIERRE

MY UNCLE PIERRE

EVERYTHING, therefore, predisposed me towards romanticism, not in form, for I was not long in understanding that this is a mistake, that though there may be two modes of feeling and thinking there can be but one form of expressing these feelings and thoughts—but towards romanticism of the mind and imagination, towards the pure ideal. I was an offshoot from the old idealist race of the most genuine growth. There is in the district of Goëlo or of Avangour, on the Trieux, a place called the Lédano, because it is there that the Trieux opens out and forms a lagoon before running into the sea. Upon the shore of the Lédano there is a large farm called Keranbélec or Meskanbélec. This was the head quarters of the Renans, who came there from Cardigan about the year 480, under the leadership of Fragan. They led there for thirteen hundred years an obscure existence, storing up sensations and thoughts the capital of which has devolved upon me

I can feel that I think for them and that they live again in me. Not one of them attempted to hoard, and the consequence was that they all remained poor. My absolute inability to be resentful or to appear so is inherited from them. The only two kinds of occupation which they knew anything of were to till the land or to steer a boat on the estuaries and archipelagos of rocks which the Trieux forms at its mouth. A short time previous to the Revolution, three of them rigged out a bark, and settled at Lézardrieux. They lived together on the bark, which was for the best part of her time laid up in a creek of the Lédano, and they sailed her when the fit took them. They could not be classed as bourgeois, for they were not jealous of the nobles: they were well-to-do sailors, independent of every one. My grandfather, one of the three, took another step towards town life; he came to live at Tréguier. When the Revolution broke out, he showed himself to be a sincere but honourable patriot. He had some little money, but, unlike all others in the same position as himself, he would not buy any of the national property, holding that this property had been ill-gotten. He did not think it honourable to make large profits without labour. The events of 1814-15 drove him half mad.

Hegel had not as yet discovered that might implies right, and in any event he would have found it

difficult to believe that France had been victorious at Waterloo. The privilege of these charming theories, of which by the way I have had rather too much, were reserved for me. On the evening of March 19th, 1815, he came to see my mother and told her to get up early the next morning and look at the tower. And surely enough he and several other patriots had during the night, upon the refusal of the clerk to give them the keys, clambered up the outside of the steeple at the risk of breaking their necks a dozen times over and hoisted the national flag. A few months later, when the opposite cause was triumphant, he literally lost his senses. He would go about in the street with an enormous tricolour cockade, exclaiming: "I should like to see any one come and take this away from me," and as he was a general favourite people used to answer: "Why, no one, Captain." My father shared the same sentiments. Taken by the English while serving under Admiral Villaret-Joyeuse, he passed several years on the pontoons. His great delight was to go each year, when the conscription was drawn, and humiliate the recruits by relating his experiences as a volunteer. Regarding with contempt those who were drawing lots, he would add: "We used not to act in this way," and he would shrug his shoulders over the degeneracy of the age.

It is from what I have seen of these excellent sailors, and from what I have read and heard about the peasants of Lithuania, and even of Poland, that I have derived my ideas as to the innate goodness of our races when they are organised after the type of the primitive clan. It is impossible to give an idea of how much goodness and even politeness and gentle manners there is in these ancient Celts. I saw the last traces of it some thirty years ago in the beautiful little island of Bréhat, with its patriarchal ways which carried one back to the time of the Pheacians. The unselfishness and the practical incapacity of these good people were beyond conception. One proof of their nobility was that whenever they attempted to engage in any commercial business they were defrauded. Never in the world's history did people ruin themselves with a lighter or more careless heart, keeping up a running fire of paradox and quips. Never in the world were the laws of common sense and sound economy more joyously trodden under foot. I asked my mother, towards the close of her life, whether it was really the case that all the members of our family whom she had known were upon as bad terms with fortune as those whom I could remember.

"All as poor as Job," she answered me. "How could it be different? None of them were born rich, and none of them pillaged their neighbours. In those

days the only rich people were the clergy and the nobles. There is, however, one exception, I mean A——, who became a millionaire. Oh! he is a very respectable person, very nearly a member of parliament, and quite likely to become one."

"How did A—— contrive to make such a large fortune while all his neighbours remained poor?"

"I cannot tell you that. . . . There are some people who are born to be rich, while there are others who never would be so. The former have claws, and do not scruple to help themselves first. That is just what we have never been able to do. When it comes to taking the best piece out of the dish which is handed round our natural politeness stands in our way. None of your ancestors could make money. They took nothing from the general mass, and would not impoverish their neighbours. Your grandfather would not buy any of the national property, as others did. Your father was like all other sailors, and the proof that he was born to be a sailor and to fight was that he had no head for business. When you were born we were in such a bad way that I took you on my knees and cried bitterly. You see that sailors are not like the rest of the world. I have known many who entered upon a term of service with a good round sum of money in their possession. They would heat the silver pieces in a frying-pan and throw them into the street, splitting their sides with

laughter at the crowd which scrambled for them. This was meant to show that it was not for mercenary motives that they were ready to risk their lives, and that honour and duty cannot be posted in a ledger. And then there was your poor uncle Peter. I cannot tell you what trouble he used to give me."

"Tell me about him," I said, "for somehow or other I like him very much."

"You saw him once; he met us near the bridge, and he lifted his hat to you, but you were too much respected in the neighbourhood for him to venture to speak to you, though I did not like to tell you so. He was one of the best-natured creatures in existence, but he could never be got to apply himself to work He was always lounging about, passing the best part of the day and night in taverns. He was honest and good-hearted withal, but there was no getting him to follow any trade. You have no idea how agreeable he was until the life he led had exhausted him. He was a universal favourite, and with his inexhaustible stock of tales, proverbs, and funny stories, he was welcome everywhere. He was very well read, too, and by no means devoid of learning. He was the oracle of the taverns, and was the life and soul of any party at which he might be present. He effected a regular literary revolution. Heretofore the only books which people

cared for were the *Quatre Fils d'Aymon* and *Renaud de Montauban.* All these ancient characters were familiar to us, and each of us had his or her favourite hero, but Peter taught us more modern tales which he took from books, but which he remodelled to suit the local taste.

"We had at that time a pretty good library. When the mission fathers came to Tréguier, during the reign of Charles X., the preacher delivered such an eloquent sermon against dangerous books that we all of us burnt any such volumes as we had. The missionary had told us that it was better to burn too many than too few, and that, for the matter of that, all books might under certain conditions be dangerous. I did like the rest of the people, but your father put several upon the top of the large wardrobe, saying that they were too handsome to be burnt; they were *Don Quixotte*, *Gil Blas*, and the *Diable Boiteux.* Peter found them there, and would read them to the common people and to the men employed in the port. And so the whole of our library disappeared. In this way he spent the modest little fortune which he possessed, and became a regular vagabond, though in spite of this he remained kind and generous, incapable of harming a worm."

"But," I rejoined, "why did not his friends send him to sea? that would have made him more regular in his ways."

"That could never have been, for he was so popular that all his friends would have run after him and fetched him back. You have no idea how full of fun he was. Poor Peter! with all his faults I could not help liking him, for he was charming at times. He could set you off into a fit of laughter with a word. He had a knack of his own for springing a joke upon you in the most unexpected way. I shall never forget the evening when they came to tell me that he had been found dead on the road to Langoat. I went and had him properly laid out. He was buried, and the priest spoke in consoling terms about the death of these poor waifs whose heart is not always so far from God as some people may imagine."

Poor Uncle Pierre! I have often thought of him. This tardy esteem will be his sole recompense. The metaphysical paradise would be no place for him. His lively imagination, his high spirits, and his keen sense of enjoyment constituted him for a distinct individualism in his own sphere. My father's character was just the opposite, for he was inclined to be sentimental and melancholy. It was when he was advanced in years and upon his return from a long voyage that he gave me birth. In the early dawn of my existence I felt the cold sea mist, shivered under the cutting morning blast and passed my bitter and gloomy watch on the quarter-deck.

GOOD MASTER SYSTÈME

GOOD MASTER SYSTEME

PART I.

I WAS related on my maternal grandmother's side to a much more prim class of people. My grandmother was a very good specimen of the middle-classes of former days. She had been excessively pretty. I can remember her towards the close of her life, and she was always dressed in the fashion which prevailed at the time of her being left a widow. She was very particular about her class, never altered her head-dress, and would not allow herself to be addressed except as "Mademoiselle." The ladies of noble birth had a great respect for her. When they met my sister Henrietta they used to kiss her and say, "My dear, your grandmother was a very respectable person, we were very fond of her. Try to be like her." And as it happened my sister did like her very much and took her as a pattern, but my mother, always laughing and full of wit, differed from her very much. Mother and daughter were in all respects a marked contrast.

The worthy burghers of Lannion and their families were models of simplicity, honour, and respectability. Several of my aunts never married, but they were very light-spirited and cheerful, thanks to the innocence of their hearts. Families dwelt together in unity, animated by the same simple faith. My aunts' sole amusement on Sundays after mass was to send a feather up into the air, each blowing at it in turn to prevent it from falling to the ground. This afforded them amusement enough to last until the following Sunday. The piety of my grandmother, her urbanity, her regard for the established order of things are graven in my heart as the best pictures of that old-fashioned society based upon God and the king—two props for which it may not be easy to find substitutes.

When the Revolution broke out my grandmother was horror-struck, and she took the lead with so many other pious persons in hiding the priests who had refused to take the oath of fidelity to the Constitution. Mass was celebrated in her drawing-room, and as the ladies of the nobility had emigrated she thought it her duty to take their place. Most of my uncles, on the other hand were ardent patriots. When any public misfortune occurred, such, for instance, as the treason of Dumouriez, my uncles allowed their beards to grow and went about with long faces, flowing cravats, and untidy garments. My grandmother would

at these times indulge in delicate but rather risky satire. "My dear Tanneguy, what is the matter with you? Has any trouble befallen us? Has anything happened to Cousin Amélie? Is my Aunt Augustine's asthma worse?"—"No, cousin, the Republic is in danger."—"Oh, is that all, my dear Tanneguy? I am so glad to hear you say so. You quite relieve me." Thus she sported for two years with the guillotine, and it is a wonder that she escaped it. A lady named Taupin, pious like herself, was associated with her in these good works. The priests were sheltered by turns in her house and in that of Madame Taupin. My uncle Y——, a very sturdy Revolutionist, but a good-hearted man at bottom, often said to her: "My cousin, if it came to my knowledge that there were priests or aristocrats concealed in your house, I should be obliged to denounce you." She always used to reply that her only acquaintances were true friends of the Republic and no mistake about it.

So it was that Madame Taupin was the one to be guillotined. My mother never related this incident to me without being very deeply moved. She showed me when I was a child the spot where the tragedy was enacted. Upon the day of the execution, my grandmother went, with all her family, out of Lannion, so as not to participate in the crime which was about to be committed. She went before daybreak to a chapel, situated rather more than a mile from the

town in a retired spot and dedicated to St. Roch. Several pious persons had arranged to meet there, and a signal was to let them know just when the knife was about to drop so that they might all be in prayer when the soul of the martyr was brought by the angels before the throne of the Most High.

All this bound people together more closely than we can form any idea of. My grandmother loved the priests and believed in their courage and devotion to duty. She was destined to meet with a very cool reception from one of them. When during the Consulate religious worship was re-established, the priest whom she had sheltered at the risk of her life was appointed incumbent of a parish near Lannion. She took my mother, then quite a child, with her, and they walked the five miles under a scorching sun. The thought of meeting again one whom she had seen keeping the night watch at her house under such tragical circumstances made her heart beat fast. The priest, whether from sacerdotal pride or from a feeling of duty, behaved in a very strange manner. He scarcely seemed to recognise her, never asked her to be seated, and dismissed her with a few short remarks. Not a word of thanks or an allusion to the past. He did not even offer her a glass of water. My grandmother could scarcely keep from fainting; and she returned to Lannion in tears, whether because she reproached herself for some feminine error of the

heart or because she was hurt by so much pride. My mother never knew whether in after years she looked back to this incident with the more of injured pride or of admiration. Perhaps, she came at last to recognise the infinite wisdom of the priest, who seemed to say to her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" and who would not admit that he had any reason to be grateful to her. It is difficult for women to comprehend this abstract feeling. Their work, whatever it may be, has always a personal object in view, and it would be hard to make them believe it natural that people should fight shoulder to shoulder without knowing and liking one another.

My mother, with her frank, cheerful, and inquisitive ways, was rather partial to the Revolution than the reverse. Unknown to my grandmother she used to go and hear the patriotic songs. The *Chant du Départ* made a great impression upon her, and when she repeated the stirring line put in the mouth of the mothers,

"De nos yeux maternels ne craignez point de larmes,"

her voice was always broken. These stirring and terrible scenes had imprinted themselves for ever upon her mind. When she began to go back over these recollections, indissolubly bound up with the days of her girlhood, when she remembered how enthusiasm and wild delight alternated with scenes of terror, her whole life seemed to rise up before her.

I learnt from her to be so proud of the Revolution that I have liked it since, in spite of my reason and of all that I have said against it. I do not withdraw anything that I have already said ; but when I see the inveterate persistency of foreign writers to try and prove that the French Revolution was one long story of folly and shame, and that it is but an unimportant factor in the world's history, I begin to think that it is perhaps the greatest of all our achievements, inasmuch as other people are so jealous of it.

GOOD MASTER SYSTÈME

PART II.

AMONG those whom I have to thank for being more a son of the Revolution than of the Crusaders was a singular character who was long a puzzle to us. He was an elderly man, whose mode of life, ideas, and habits were in striking contrast with those of the country at large. I used to see him every day, with his threadbare cloak, going to buy a pennyworth of milk which the girl who sold it poured into the tin he brought with him. He was poor without being literally in want. He never spoke to any one, but he had a very gentle look about the eyes, and those who had happened to be brought into contact with him spoke in very eulogistic terms of his amiability and good sense. I never knew his name, and I do not believe that any one else did. He did not belong to our part of the country, and he had no relations. He was allowed to go his own way, and his singular mode of life excited no other feeling than one of surprise; but

it had not always been so. He had passed through many vicissitudes. At one time he had been in communication with the people of the place and had imparted some of his ideas to them; but no one understood what he meant. The word *system* which he used several times tickled their fancy, and this nickname was at once applied to him. If he had gone on imparting his ideas he would have got himself into trouble, and the children would have pelted him. Like a wise man he kept his tongue between his teeth, and no one attempted to molest him. He came out every day to make his modest purchases, and of an evening he would take a walk in some unfrequented spot. He was of a serious but not melancholy cast of countenance, and with more of an amiable than morose expression. Later in life when I read Colerus's *Life of Spinoza*, I at once saw that as a child I had had before my eyes the very image of the holy man of Amsterdam. He was left to follow his own courses, and was even treated with respect. His resigned and affable airs seemed like a glimpse from another world. People did not understand him, but they felt that he possessed higher qualities to which they paid implicit homage.

He never went to church, and avoided any occasion of having to make external display of religious belief. The clergy were very unfavourable to him and though they did not denounce him from the

pulpit, as he had never given any cause for scandal, his name was always mentioned with repugnance. A peculiar incident occurred to fan this animosity into a flame, and to involve the aged recluse in an atmosphere of ghostly terror. He possessed a very large library, consisting of works belonging to the eighteenth century. All those philosophical treatises which have exercised a wider influence than Luther and Calvin were to be found in it, and the old bookworm knew them by heart, and eked out a living by lending them to some of his neighbours. The clergy looked upon this as the abomination of desolation, and strictly forbade their flocks to borrow these books. System's lodging was looked upon as a receptacle for every kind of impiety.

I, as a matter of course, looked upon him and his books in the same light, and it was only when my ideas upon philosophy were well consolidated that I came to understand that I had been fortunate enough during my youth to contemplate a truly wise man. I had no difficulty in reconstructing his ideas by piecing together a few words which at the time had appeared to me unintelligible, but which I had remembered. God, in his eyes, was the order of nature, from which all things proceed, and he would not brook contradiction upon this point. He loved humanity as representing reason, and he hated superstition as the negation of reason. Although he had not

the poetic afflatus which the nineteenth century has given to these great truths, System, I feel sure, had very high and far-reaching views. He was quite in the right. So far from failing to appreciate the greatness of God, he looked with contempt upon those who believed that they could move Him. Lost in profound tranquillity and unaffected humility, he saw that human error was more to be pitied than hated. It was evident that he despised his age. The revival of superstition, which, he thought, had been buried by Voltaire and Rousseau, seemed to him a sign of utter imbecility in the rising generation.

He was found dead one morning in his humble room, with his books and papers littered all about him. This was soon after the Revolution of 1830, and the mayor had him decently interred at night. The clergy purchased the whole of his library at a nominal price and made away with it. No papers were found which served to elucidate the mystery which had always surrounded him, but in the corner of one drawer was found a packet containing some faded flowers tied up with a tricoloured ribbon. At first this was supposed to be some love-token, and several people built upon this foundation a romantic biography of the deceased recluse, but the tricolour ribbon tended to discredit this version. My mother never believed that it was the correct one. Although she had an instinctive feeling of respect for System,

she always said to me: "I am sure that he was one of the Terrorists. I sometimes fancy that I remember seeing him in 1793. Besides, he has all the ways and ideas of M——, who terrorised Lannion and kept the guillotine in constant play there during the time that Robespierre had the upper hand." Fifteen or twenty years ago, I read the following paragraph in a newspaper:

"There died yesterday, almost suddenly, in an unfrequented street of the Faubourg St. Jacques, an old man whose way of living was a constant source of gossip in the neighbourhood. He was respected in the parish as a model of charity and kindness, but he was careful to avoid any allusion to his past. A few works, such as Volney's *Catechism*, and odd volumes of Rousseau, were scattered about the table. All his property consisted of a trunk, which, when opened by the Commissary of Police, was found to contain only a few clothes and a faded bouquet carefully wrapped up in a piece of paper on which was written: 'Bouquet which I wore at the festival of the Supreme Being, 20 Prairial, year II."

This explained the whole thing to me. I remembered how the few disciples of the Jacobite School whom I had known were ardently attached to the recollections of 1793-94 and incapable of dwelling upon anything else. The twelvemonths' dream was so vivid that those who had experienced it could not

come back to real life. They were ever haunted by the same sinister fancy; they had a *delirium tremens* of blood. They were uncompromising in their belief, and the world at large, which no longer pitched its note to their cry, seemed idle and empty in their eyes. Left standing alone like the survivors of a world of giants, loaded with the opprobrium of the human race, they could hold no sort of communion with the living. I could quite understand the effect which Lakanal must have produced when he returned from America in 1833 and appeared among his colleagues of the *Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques* like a phantom. I could understand Daunou looking upon M. Cousin and M. Guizot as dangerous Jesuits. By a not uncommon contrast these survivors of the fierce struggles and combats of the Revolution had become as gentle as lambs. Man, to be kind, need not necessarily have a logical basis for his kindness. The most cruel of the Inquisitors of the middle ages, Conrad of Marburg for instance, were the kindest of men. This we see in *Torquemada*, where the genius of Victor Hugo shows us how a man may send his fellows to the stake out of charity and sentimentalism.

LITTLE NOÉMI

LITTLE NOÉMI

PART I.

ALTHOUGH the religious and too premature sacerdotal education which I had received prevented me from being on any intimate terms with young people of the other sex, I had several little girl-friends one of whom more particularly has left a profound impression upon me. From an early age I preferred the society of girls to boys, and the latter did not like me, as I was too effeminate for them. We could not play together, as they called me "Mademoiselle," and teased me in a variety of ways. On the other hand, I got on very well with girls of my own age, and they found me very sensible and steady. I was about twelve or thirteen, and I could not account for the preference. The vague idea which attracted me to them was, I think, that men are at liberty to do many things which women cannot, and the latter consequently had, in my eyes, the charm of being weak and beautiful creatures, subject in their daily life to rules of conduct which they did not attempt to override. All those whom I

had known were the pattern of modesty. The first feeling which stirred in me was one of pity, so to speak, coupled with the idea of assisting them in their becoming resignation, of liking them for their reserve, and making it easier for them. I quite felt my own intellectual superiority; but even at that early age, I felt that the woman who is very beautiful or very good, solves completely the problem of which we, with all our hard-headedness, make such a hash. We are mere children or pedants compared to her. I as yet understood this only vaguely, though I saw clearly enough that beauty is so great a gift that talent, genius, and even virtue are nothing when weighed in the balance with it; so that the woman who is really beautiful has the right to hold herself superior to everybody and everything, inasmuch as she combines not in a creation outside of herself, but in her very person, as in a Myrrhine vase, all the qualities which genius painfully endeavours to reproduce.

Among these, my companions, there was, as I have said, one to whom I was particularly attached. Her name was Noémi, and she was quite a model of good conduct and grace. Her eyes had a languid look, which denoted at once good-nature and quickness; her hair was beautifully fair. She was about two years my senior, and she treated me partly as an elder sister, partly with the confidential affection of

one child for another. We got on very well together, and while our friends were constantly falling out, we were always of one mind. I tried to make these quarrels up, but she never thought that I should be successful, and would tell me that it was hopeless to try and make everybody agree. These attempts at mediation, which gave us an imperceptible superiority over the other children, formed a very pleasing tie between us. Even now I cannot hear "*Nous n'irons plus au bois*," or "*Il pleut, il pleut, bergère*," without my heart beating rather more quickly than is its wont. There can be no doubt that but for the fatal vice which held me fast, I should have been in love with Noémi two or three years later; but I was a slave to reasoning, and my whole time was devoted to religious dialectics. The flow of abstractions which rushed to the head made me giddy, and caused me to be absent-minded and oblivious of all else.

This budding affection was, moreover, turned from its course by a peculiar defect which has more than once been injurious to my prospects in life. This is my indecision of character, which often leads me into positions from which I have great difficulty in extricating myself. This defect was further complicated in this particular case by a good quality which has led me into as many difficulties as the most serious of defects There was among these children a little

girl though much less pretty than Noémi, who, gentle and amiable as she was, did not get nearly so much notice taken of her. She was even fonder of making me her companion than Noémi, of whom she was rather jealous. I have never been able to do a thing which would give pain to any one. I had a vague sort of idea that a woman who was not very pretty must be unhappy and feel the inward pang of having missed her fate. I was oftener, therefore, with her than with Noémi, because I saw that she was melancholy. So I allowed my first love to go off at a tangent, just as, later in life, I did in politics, and in a very bungling sort of way. Once or twice I noticed Noémi laughing to herself at my simple folly. She was always nice with me, but at times her manner was slightly sarcastic, and this tinge of irony, which she made no attempt to conceal, only rendered her more charming in my eyes.

The struggles amid which I grew to manhood nearly effaced her from my memory. In after years I often fancied that I could see her again, and one day I asked my mother what had become of her. "She is dead," my mother replied, "and of a broken heart. She had no fortune of her own. When she lost her father and mother, her aunt—a very respectable woman who kept the equally respectable Hotel ——, took her to live there. She did the best she could. Even as a child, when you knew

her, she was charming, but at two-and-twenty she was marvellously beautiful. Her hair—which she tried in vain to keep out of sight under a heavy cap—came down over her neck in wavy tresses like handfuls of ripe wheat. She did all that she could to conceal her beauty. Her beautiful figure was disguised by a cape, and her long white hands were always covered with mittens. But it was all of no use. Groups of young men would assemble in church to see her at her devotions. She was too beautiful for our country, and she was as good as she was beautiful." My mother's story touched me very much. I have thought of her much more frequently since, and when it pleased God to give me a daughter I named her Noémi.

LITTLE NOÉMI

PART II.

THE world in its progress cares little more how many it crushes than the car of the idol of Juggernaut. The whole of the ancient society which I have endeavoured to portray has disappeared. Bréhat has passed out of existence. I revisited it six years ago and should not have known it again. Some genius in the capital of the department has discovered that certain ancient usages of the island are not in keeping with some article of the code, and a peaceable and well-to-do population has been reduced to revolt and beggary. These islands and coasts which were formerly such a good nursery for the navy are so no longer. The railways and the steamers have been the ruin of them. And like old Breton bards, to what a case they have been brought! I found several of them a few years ago among the Bas-Bretons who came to eke out a miserable existence at St. Malo. One of them, who was employed in sweeping the streets, came to see me. He explained to me in

Breton—for he could not speak a word of French—his ideas as to the decadence of all poetry and the inferiority of the new schools. He was attached to the old style—the narrative ballad—and he began to sing to me the one which he deemed the prettiest of them. The subject of it was the death of Louis XVI. He burst into tears, and when he got to Santerre's beating of the drums he could not continue. Rising proudly to his feet, he said: "If the king could have spoken, the spectators would have rallied to him." Poor dear man!

With all these instances before me the case of the wealthy M.A., seemed to me all the more singular. When I asked my mother to explain it to me, she always evaded an answer and spoke vaguely of adventures on the coast of Madagascar. Upon one occasion, I pressed her more closely and asked her how it was that the coasting trade, at which no one had ever made money, could have made a millionaire of him. "How obstinate you are, Ernest," she replied. "I have often told you not to ask me that! Z—— is the only person in our circle who has any pretensions to polish; he is in a good position; he is rich and respected; there is no need to ask him how he made his money." "Tell me all the same." "Well if you must know, and as people cannot get rich without soiling their fingers more or less, he was in the slave trade."

A noble people, fit only to serve nobles, and in harmony of ideas with them, is in our day at the very antipodes of sound political economy, and is bound to die of starvation. Persons of delicate ideas, who are hampered by honourable scruples of one kind and another, stand no chance with the matter-of-fact competitors who are the men not to let slip any advantage in the battle of life. I soon found this out when I began to know something of the planet in which we live, and hence there arose within me a struggle or rather a dualism which has been the secret of all my opinions. I did not in any way lose my fondness for the ideal; it still is and always will be implanted in me as strongly as ever. The most trifling act of goodness, the least spark of talent, are in my eyes infinitely superior to all riches and worldly achievements. But as I had a well-balanced mind I saw that the ideal and reality have nothing in common; that the world is, at all events for the time, given over to what is commonplace and paltry; that the cause which generous souls will embrace is sure to be the losing one; and that what men of refined intellect hold to be true in literature and poetry is always wrong in the dull world of accomplished facts. The events which followed the Revolution of 1848 confirmed all their ideas. It turned out that the most alluring dreams, when carried into the domain of facts, were mischievous to the last degree, and that the affairs of

the world were never so well managed as when the idealists had no part or lot in them. From that time I accustomed myself to follow a very singular course: that is to shape my practical judgments in direct opposition to my theoretical judgments, and to regard as possible that which was in contradiction with my desires. A somewhat lengthy experience had shown me that the cause I sympathised with always failed and that the one which I decried was certain to be triumphant. The lamer a political solution was, the brighter appeared to me its prospect of being accepted in the world of realities.

In fine, I only care for characters of an absolute idealism: martyrs, heroes, utopists, friends of the impossible. They are the only persons in whom I interest myself; they are, if I may be permitted to say so, my specialty. But I see what those whose imagination runs away with them fail to see, viz., that these flights of fancy are no longer of any use and that for a long time to come the heroic follies which were deified in the past will fall flat. The enthusiasm of 1792 was a great and noble outburst, but it was one of those things which will not recur. Jacobinism, as M. Thiers has clearly shown, was the salvation of France; now it would be her ruin. The events of 1870 have by no means cured me of my pessimism. They taught me the high value of evil, and that the cynical disavowal of all sentiment, generosity and

chivalry gives pleasure to the world at large and is invariably successful. Egotism is the exact opposite of what I had been accustomed to regard as noble and good. We see that in this world egotism alone commands success. England has until within the last few years been the first nation in the world because she was the most selfish. Germany has acquired the hegemony of the world by repudiating without scruple the principles of political morality which she once so eloquently preached.

This is the explanation of the anomaly that having on several occasions been called upon to give practical advice in regard to the affairs of my country, this advice has always been in direct contradiction with my artistic views. In so doing, I have been actuated by conscientious motives. I have endeavoured to evade the ordinary cause of my errors ; I have taken the counterpart of my instincts and been on guard against my idealism. I am always afraid that my mode of thought will lead me wrong and blind me to one side of the question. This is how it is that, much as I love what is good, I am perhaps over indulgent for those who have taken another view of life, and that, while always being full of work, I ask myself very often whether the idlers are not right after all.

So far as regards enthusiasm, I have got as much of it as any one ; but I believe that the reality will have none of it, and that with the reign of men of business,

manufacturers, the working class (which is the most selfish of all), Jews, English of the old school and Germans of the new school, has been ushered in a materialist age in which it will be as difficult to bring about the triumph of a generous idea as to produce the silvery note of the great bell of Notre Dame with one cast in lead or tin. It is strange, moreover, that while not pleasing one side I have not deceived the other. The bourgeois have not been the least grateful to me for my concessions; they have read me better than I can read myself, and they have seen that I was but a poor sort of Conservative, and that without the most remote intention of acting in bad faith, I should have played them false twenty times over out of affection for the ideal, my ancient mistress. They felt that the hard things which I said to her were only superficial, and that I should be unable to resist the first smile which she might bestow upon me.

We must create the heavenly kingdom, that is the ideal one, within ourselves. The time is past for the creation of miniature worlds, refined Thélèmes, based upon mutual affection and esteem; but life, well understood and well lived, in a small circle of persons who can appreciate one another, brings its own reward. Communion of spirit is the greatest and the only reality. This is why my thoughts revert so willingly to those worthy priests who were my first masters, to the honest sailors who lived only to

to do their duty, to little Noémi who died because she was too beautiful, to my grandfather who would not buy the national property, and to good Master Système, who was happy inasmuch as he had his hour of illusion. Happiness consists in devotion to a dream or to a duty; self-sacrifice is the surest means of securing repose. One of the early Buddhas who preceded Sakya-Mouni obtained the *nirvana* in a singular way. He saw one day a falcon chasing a little bird. "I beseech thee," he said to the bird of prey, "leave this little creature in peace; I will give thee its weight from my own flesh." A small pair of scales descended from the heavens, and the transaction was carried out. The little bird settled itself upon one side of the scales, and the saint placed in the other platter a good slice of his flesh, but the beam did not move. Bit by bit the whole of his body went into the scales, but still the scales were motionless. Just as the last shred of the holy man's body touched the scale the beam fell, the little bird flew away and the saint entered into *nirvana*. The falcon, who had not, all said and done, made a bad bargain, gorged itself on his flesh.

The little bird represents the unconsidered trifles of beauty and innocence which our poor planet, worn out as it may be, will ever contain. The falcon represents the far larger proportion of egotism and gross appetites which make up the sum of humanity.

The wise man purchases the free enjoyment of what is good and noble by making over his flesh to the greedy, who, while engrossed by this material feast, leave him and the free objects of his fancy in peace. The scales coming down from above represent fatality, which is not to be moved, and which will not accept a partial sacrifice; but from which, by a total abnegation of self, by casting it a prey, we can escape, as it then has no further hold upon us. The falcon, for its part is content when virtue, by the sacrifices which she makes, secures for it greater advantages than it could obtain by the force of its own claws. Desiring a profit from virtue, its interest is that virtue should exist; and so the wise man, by the surrender of his material privileges, attains his one aim, which is to secure free enjoyment of the ideal.

THE PETTY SEMINARY OF SAINT NICHOLAS DU CHARDONNET

THE PETTY SEMINARY OF SAINT NICHOLAS DU CHARDONNET

PART I.

MANY persons who allow that I have a perspicuous mind wonder how I came during my boyhood and youth to put faith in creeds, the impossibility of which has since been so clearly revealed to me. Nothing, however, can be more simple, and it is very probable that if an extraneous incident had not suddenly taken me from the honest but narrow-minded associations amid which my youth was passed, I should have preserved all my life long the faith which in the beginning appeared to me as the absolute expression of the truth. I have said how I was educated in a small school kept by some honest priests, who taught me Latin after the old fashion (which was the right one), that is to say to read out of trumpery primers, without method and almost without grammer, as Erasmus and the humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, who are the best Latin scholars since the days of old,

used to learn it. These worthy priests were patterns of all that is good. Devoid of anything like *pedagogy*, to use the modern phrase, they followed the first rule of education, which is not to make too easy the tasks which have for their aim the mastering of a difficulty. Their main object was to make their pupils into honourable men. Their lessons of goodness and morality, which impressed me as being the literal embodiments of virtue and high feeling, were part and parcel of the dogma which they taught. The historical education they had given me consisted solely in reading Rollin. Of criticism, the natural sciences, and philosophy I as yet knew nothing of course. Of all that concerned the nineteenth century, and the new ideas as to history and literature expounded by so many gifted thinkers, my teachers knew nothing. It was impossible to imagine a more complete isolation from the ambient air. A thorough-paced Legitimist would not even admit the possibility of the Revolution or of Napoleon being mentioned except with a shudder. My only knowledge of the Empire was derived from the lodge-keeper of the school. He had in his room several popular prints. "Look at Bonaparte," he said to me one day, pointing to one of these, "he was a patriot, he was!" No allusion was ever made to contemporary literature, and the literature of France terminated with Abbé Delille. They had heard

of Chateaubriand, but, with a truer instinct than that of the would-be Neo-Catholics, whose heads are crammed with all sorts of delusions, they mistrusted him. A Tertullian enlivening his Apologeticum with *Atala* and *René* was not calculated to command their confidence. Lamartine perplexed them more sorely still; they guessed that his religious faith was not built on very strong foundations, and they foresaw his subsequent falling away. This gift of observation did credit to their orthodox sagacity, but the result was that the horizon of their pupils was a very narrow one. Rollin's *Traité des Études* is a work full of large-minded views compared to the circle of pious mediocrity within which they felt it their duty to confine themseves.

Thus the education which I received in the years following the Revolution of 1830 was the same as that which was imparted by the strictest of religious sects two centuries ago. It was none the worse for that, being the same forcible mode of teaching, distinctively religious, but not in the least Jesuitical, under which the youth of ancient France had studied, and which gave so serious and so Christian a turn to the mind. Educated by teachers who had inherited the qualities of Port Royal, minus their heresy, but minus also their power over the pen, I may claim forgiveness for having, at the age of twelve or fifteen, admitted the truth of Christianity like any pupil of Nicole or M. Hermant.

My state of mind was very much that of so many clever men of the seventeenth century, who put religion beyond the reach of doubt, though this did not prevent them having very clear ideas upon all other topics. I afterwards learnt facts which caused me to abandon my Christian beliefs, but they must be profoundly ignorant of history and of human intelligence who do not understand how strong a hold the simple and honest discipline of the priests took upon the more gifted of their students. The basis of this primitive form of education was the strictest morality, which they inculated as inseparable from religious practice, and they made us regard the possession of life as implying duties towards truth. The very effort to shake off opinions, in some respects unreasonable, had its advantages. Because a Paris flibbertigibbet disposes with a joke of creeds, from which Pascal, with all his reasoning powers, could not shake himself free, it must not be concluded that the Gavroche is superior to Pascal. I confess that I at times feel humiliated to think that it cost me five or six years of arduous research, and the study of Hebrew, the Semitic languages, Gesenius, and Ewald to arrive at the result which this urchin achieves in a twinkling. These pilings of Pelion upon Ossa seem to me, when looked at in this light, a mere waste of time. But Père Hardouin observed that he had not got up at four o'clock every morning for forty

years to think as all the world thought. So I am loth to admit that I have been at so much pains to fight a mere *chimæra bombinans*. No, I cannot think that my labours have been all in vain, nor that victory is to be won in theology as cheaply as the scoffers would have us believe. There are, in reality, but few people who have a right not to believe in Christianity. If the great mass of people only knew how strong is the net woven by the theologians, how difficult it is to break the threads of it, how much erudition has been spent upon it, and what a power of criticism is required to unravel it all. . . . I have noticed that some men of talent who have set themselves too late in life the task have been taken in the toils and have not been able to extricate themselves.

My tutors taught me something which was infinitely more valuable than criticism or philosophic wisdom; they taught me to love truth, to respect reason, and to see the serious side of life. This is the only part in me which has never changed. I left their care with my moral sense so well prepared to stand any test, that this precious jewel passed uninjured through the crucible of Parisian frivolity. I was so well prepared for the good and for the true that I could not possibly have followed a career which was not devoted to the things of the mind. My teachers rendered me so unfit for any secular work that I was perforce embarked upon a spiritual career. The intellectual

life was the only noble one in my eyes ; and mercenary cares seemed to me servile and unworthy.

I have never departed from the sound and wholesome programme which my masters sketched out for me. I no longer believe Christianity to be the supernatural summary of all that man can know ; but I still believe that life is the most frivolous of things, unless it is regarded as one great and constant duty. Oh! my beloved old teachers, now nearly all with the departed, whose image often rises before me in my dreams, not as a reproach but as a grateful memory, I have not been so unfaithful to you as you believe! Yes, I have said that your history was very short measure, that your critique had no existence, and that your natural philosophy fell far short of that which leads us to accept as a fundamental dogma: "There is no special supernatural ;" but in the main I am still your disciple. Life is only of value by devotion to what is true and good. Your conception of what is good was too narrow ; your view of truth too material and too concrete, but you were, upon the whole, in the right, and I thank you for having inculcated in me like a second nature the principle, fatal to worldly success but prolific of happiness, that the aim of a life worth living should be ideal and unselfish.

Most of my fellow-students were brawny and high-spirited young peasants from the neighbourhood of

Tréguier, and, like most individuals occupying an inferior place in the scale of civilization, they were inclined to air an exaggerated regard for bodily strength, and to show a certain amount of contempt for women and for anything which they considered effeminate. Most of them were preparing for the priesthood. My experiences of that time put me in a very good position for understanding the historical phenomena, which occur when a vigorous barbarism first comes into contact with civilization. I can quite easily understand the intellectual condition of the Germans at the Carlovingian epoch, the psychological and literary condition of a Saxo Grammaticus and a Hrabanus Maurus. Latin had a very singular effect upon their rugged natures, and they were like mastodons going in for a degree. They took everything as serious as the Laplanders do when you give them the Bible to read. We exchanged with regard to Sallust and Livy, impressions which must have resembled those of the disciples of St. Gall or St. Colomb when they were learning Latin. We decided that Cæsar was not a great man because he was not virtuous, our philosophy of history was as artless and childlike as might have been that of the Heruli.

The morals of all these young people, left entirely to themselves and with no one to look after them, were irreproachable. There were very few boarders at the

Tréguier College just then. Most of the students who did not belong to the town boarded in private houses, and their parents used to bring them in on market day their provisions for the week. I remember one of these houses, close to our own, in which several of my fellow-students lodged. The mistress of it, who was an indefatigable housewife, died, and her husband, who at the best of times was no genius, drowned what little he had in the cider-cup every evening. A little servant-maid, who was wonderfully intelligent, took the whole burden upon her shoulders. The young students determined to help her, and so the house went on despite the old tippler. I always heard my comrades speak very highly of this little servant, who was a model of virtue and who was gifted, moreover, with a very pleasing face.

The fact is that, according to my experience, all the allegations against the morality of the clergy are devoid of foundation. I passed thirteen years of my life under the charge of priests, and I never saw anything approaching to a scandal ; all the priests I have known have been good men. Confession may possibly be productive of evil in some countries, but I never saw anything of the sort during my ecclesiastical experience. The old-fashioned book which I used for making my examinations of conscience was innocence itself. There was only one sin which excited my curiosity and made me feel

uneasy. I was afraid that I might have been guilty of it unawares. I mustered up courage enough, one day, to ask my confessor what was meant by the phrase: "To be guilty of simony in the collation of benefices." The good priest reassured me and told me that I could not have committed that sin.

Persuaded by my teachers of two absolute truths, the first, that no one who has any respect for himself can engage in any work that is not ideal—and that all the rest is secondary, of no importance, not to say shameful, *ignominia seculi*—and the second, that Christianity embodies everything which is ideal, I could not do otherwise than regard myself as destined for the priesthood. This thought was not the result of reflection, impulse, or reasoning. It came so to speak, of itself. The possibility of a lay career never so much as occurred to me. Having adopted with the utmost seriousness and docility the principles of my teachers, and having brought myself to consider all commercial and mercenary pursuits as inferior and degrading, and only fit for those who had failed in their studies, it was only natural that I should wish to be what they were. They were my patterns in life, and my sole ambition was to be like them, professor at the College of Tréguier, poor, exempt from all material cares, esteemed and respected like them.

Not but what the instincts which in after years led me away from these paths of peace already existed

within me; but they were dormant. From the accident of my birth I was torn by conflicting forces. There was some Basque and Bordeaux blood in my mother's family, and unknown to me the Gascon half of myself played all sorts of tricks with the Breton half. Even my family was divided, my father, my grandfather, and my uncles being, as I have already said, the reverse of clerical, while my maternal grandmother was the centre of a society which knew no distinction between royalism and religion. I recently found among some old papers a letter from my grandmother addressed to an estimable maiden lady named Guyon, who used to spoil me very much when I was a child, and who was then suffering from a dreadful cancer.

TRÉGUIER, *March* 19, 1831.

"Though two months have elapsed since Natalie informed me of your departure for Tréglamus, this is the first time I have had a few moments to myself to write and tell you, my dear friend, how deeply I sympathise with you in your sad position. Your sufferings go to my heart, and nothing but the most urgent necessity has prevented me from writing to you before. The death of a nephew, the eldest son of my defunct sister, plunged us into great sorrow. A few days later, poor little Ernest, son of my eldest daughter, and a brother of Henriette, the boy whom

you were so fond of and who has not forgotten you, fell ill. For forty days he was hanging between life and death, and we have now reached the fifty-fifth day of his illness and still he does not make much progress towards his recovery. He is pretty well in the day-time, but his nights are very bad. From ten in the evening to five or six in the morning, he is feverish and half-delirious. I have said enough to excuse myself in the eyes of one who is so kind-hearted and who will forgive me. How I wish I was by your side to repay you the attention you bestowed on me with so much zeal and benevolence. My great grief is to be unable to help you.

"*March 20th.*

"I was sent for to the bedside of my dear little grandson, and I was obliged to break off my conversation with you, which I now resume, my dear friend, to exhort you to put all your trust in God It is He who afflicts us, but He consoles us with the hope of a reward far beyond what we suffer. Let us be of good cheer; our pains and our sorrows do not last long, and the reward is eternal.

Dear Natalie tells me how patient and resigned you are amid the most cruel sufferings. That is quite in keeping with your high feelings. She says that never a complaint comes from you however keen your pain. How pleasing you are in God's sight by your patience and resignation to His

heavenly will. He afflicts you, but those whom He loveth He chasteneth. What joy can be compared to that which God's love gives? I send you *L'Ame sur le Calvaire*, which will furnish you with much consolation in the example of a God who suffered and died for us. Madame D—— will be so kind, I am sure, as to read you a chapter of it every day, if you cannot read yourself. Give her my kindest regards, and beg her to write and tell me how you are going on, and how she is herself. If you will not think me troublesome I will write to you more frequently, Good-bye, my dear friend. May God pour upon you His grace and blessing. Be patient and of good cheer.

"Your ever devoted friend,

"WIDOW. . . ."

"In taking the Communion to-day my prayers were specially for you. My daughter, Henriette, and Ernest, who has passed a much better night, beg to be remembered, as also does Clara. We often talk of you. Let me know how you are, I beg of you. When you have read *L'Ame sur le Calvaire* you can send it back to me, and I will let you have *L'Esprit Consolateur*."

The letter and the books were never sent, for my mother, who was to have forwarded them, learnt that Mademoiselle Guyon had died. Some of the

consolatory remarks which the letter contains may seem very trite, but are there any better ones to offer a person afflicted with cancer? They are, at all events, as good as laudanum. As a matter of fact the Revolution had left no impress upon the people among whom I lived. The religious ideas of the people were not touched; the congregations came together again, and the nuns of the old orders, converted into schoolmistresses, imparted to women the same education as before. Thus my sister's first mistress was an old Ursuline nun, who was very fond of her, and who made her learn by heart the psalms which are chanted in church. After a year or two the worthy old lady had reached the end of her tether, and was conscientious enough to come and tell my mother so. She said, "I have nothing more to teach her; she knows all that I know better than I do myself." The Catholic faith revived in these remote districts, with all its respectable gravity and, fortunately for it, disencumbered of the worldly and temporal bonds which the ancient *régime* had forged for it.

This complexity of origin is, I believe, to a great extent the cause of my seeming inconsistency. I am double, as it were, and one half of me laughs while the other weeps. This is the explanation of my cheerfulness. As I am two spirits in one body, one of them has always cause to be content. While upon the one hand I was only anxious to be a village priest or

tutor in a seminary, I was all the time dreaming the strangest dreams. During divine service I used to fall into long reveries; my eyes wandered to the ceiling of the chapel, upon which I read all sorts of strange things. My thoughts wandered to the great men whom we read of in history. I was playing one day, when six years old, with one of my cousins and other friends, and we amused ourselves by selecting our future professions. "And what will you be?" my cousin asked me. "I shall make books." "You mean that you will be a bookseller." "Oh, no," I replied, "I mean to make books—to compose them."

These dawning dispositions needed time and favourable circumstances to be developed, and what was so completely lacking in all my surroundings was ability. My worthy tutors were not endowed with any seductive qualities. With their unswerving moral solidity, they were the very contrary of the southerners—of the Neapolitan, for instance, who is all glitter and clatter. Ideas did not ring within their minds with the sonorous clash of crossing swords. Their head was like what a Chinese cap without bells would be; you might shake it, but it would not jingle. That which constitutes the essence of talent, the desire to show off one's thoughts to the best advantage, would have seemed to them sheer frivolity, like women's love of dress, which they denounced as a positive sin. This excessive abnegation of self, this

too ready disposition to repulse what the world at large likes by an *Abrenuntio tibi, Satana*, is fatal to literature. It will be said, perhaps, that literature necessarily implies more or less of sin. If the Gascon tendency to elude many difficulties with a joke, which I derived from my mother, had always been dormant in me, my spiritual welfare would perhaps have been assured. In any event, if I had remained in Brittany I should never have known anything of the vanity which the public has liked and encouraged—that of attaining a certain amount of art in the arrangement of words and ideas. Had I lived in Brittany I should have written like Rollin. When I came to Paris I had no sooner given people a taste of what few qualities I possessed than they took a liking for them, and so—to my disadvantage it may be—I was tempted to go on.

I will at some future time describe how it came to pass that special circumstances brought about this change, which I underwent without being at heart in the least inconsistent with my past. I had formed such a serious idea of religious belief and duty that it was impossible for me, when once my faith faded, to wear the mask which sits so lightly upon many others. But the impress remained, and though I was not a priest by profession I was so in disposition. All my failings sprung from that. My first masters taught me to despise laymen, and inculcated the idea that

the man who has not a mission in life is the scum of the earth. Thus it is that I have had a strong and unfair bias against the commercial classes. Upon the other hand, I am very fond of the people, and especially of the poor. I am the only man of my time who has understood the characters of Jesus and of Francis of Assisi. There was a danger of my thus becoming a democrat like Lamennais. But Lamennais merely exchanged one creed for another, and it was not until the close of his life that he acquired the cool temper necessary to the critic, whereas the same process which weaned me from Christianity made me impervious to any other practical enthusiasm. It was the very philosophy of knowledge which, in my revolt against scholasticism, underwent such a profound modification.

A more serious drawback is that, having never indulged in gaiety while young, and yet having a good deal of irony and cheerfulness in my temperament, I have been compelled, at an age when we see how vain and empty it all is, to be very lenient as regards foibles which I had never indulged in myself, so much so that many persons who have not perhaps been as steady as I was have been shocked at my easy-going indifference. This holds especially true of politics. This is a matter upon which I feel easier in my mind than upon any other, and yet a great many people look upon me as being very lax.

I cannot get out of my head the idea that perhaps the libertine is right after all and practises the true philosophy of life. This has led me to express too much admiration for such men as Sainte-Beuve and Théophile Gautier. Their affectation of immorality prevented me from seeing how incoherent their philosophy was. The fear of appearing pharisaical, the idea, evangelical in itself, that he who is immaculate has the right to be indulgent, and the dread of misleading, if by chance all the doctrines emitted by the professors of philosophy were wrong, made my system of morality appear rather shaky. It is, in reality, as solid as the rock. These little liberties which I allow myself are by way of a recompense for my strict adherence to the general code. So in politics I indulge in reactionary remarks so that I may not have the appearance of a Liberal understrapper. I don't want people to take me for being more of a dupe than I am in reality ; I would not upon any account trade upon my opinions, and what I especially dread is to appear in my own eyes to be passing bad money. Jesus has influenced me more in this respect than people may think, for He loved to show up and deride hypocrisy, and in His parable of the Prodigal Son He places morality upon its true footing—kindness of heart—while seeming to upset it altogether.

To the same cause may be attributed another of

my defects, a tendency to waver which has almost neutralized my power of giving verbal expression to my thoughts in many matters. The priest carries his sacred character into every relation of life, and there is a good deal of what is conventional about what he says. In this respect, I have remained a priest, and this is all the more absurd because I do not derive any benefit either for myself or for my opinions. In my writings, I have been outspoken to a degree. Not only have I never said anything which I do not think, but, what is much less frequent and far more difficult, I have said all I think. But in talking and in letter-writing, I am at times singularly weak. I do not attach any importance to this, and, with the exception of the select few between whom and myself there is a bond of intellectual brotherhood, I say to people just what I think is likely to please them. In the society of fashionable people I am utterly lost. I get into a muddle and flounder about, losing the thread of my ideas in some tissue of absurdity. With an inveterate habit of being over polite, as priests generally are, I am too anxious to detect what the person I am talking with would like said to him. My attention, when I am conversing with any one, is engrossed in trying to guess at his ideas, and, from excess of deference, to anticipate him in the expression of them. This is based upon the supposition that very few men are so far unconcerned as to their own ideas

as not to be annoyed when one differs from them. I only express myself freely with people whose opinions I know to sit lightly upon them, and who look down upon everything with good-natured contempt. My correspondence will be a disgrace to me if it should be published after my death. It is a perfect torture for me to write a letter. I can understand a person airing his talents before ten as before ten thousand persons, but before one! Before beginning to write, I hesitate and reflect, and make out a rough copy of what I shall say; very often I go to sleep over it. A person need only look at these letters with their heavy wording and abrupt sentences to see that they were composed in a state of torpor which borders on sleep. Reading over what I have written, I see that it is poor stuff, and that I have said many things which I cannot vouch for. In despair, I fasten down the envelope, with the feeling that I have posted a letter which is beneath criticism.

In short, all my defects are those of the young ecclesiastical student of Tréguier. I was born to be a priest, as others are born to be soldiers and lawyers. The very fact of my being successful in my studies was a proof of it. What was the good of learning Latin so thoroughly if it was not for the Church? A peasant, noticing all my dictionaries upon one occasion, observed: "These, I suppose, are the books

which people study when they are preparing for the priesthood." As a matter of fact, all those who studied at school at all were in training for the ecclesiastical profession. The priestly order stood on a par with the nobility: "When you meet a noble," I have heard it observed, "you salute him, because he represents the king; when you meet a priest, you salute him because he represents God." To make a priest was regarded as the greatest of good works; and the elderly spinsters who had a little money thought that they could not find a better use for it than in paying the college fees of a poor but hard-working young peasant. When he came to be a priest, he became their own child, their glory, and their honour. They followed him in his career, and watched over his conduct with jealous care. As a natural consequence of my assiduity in study I was destined for the priesthood. Moreover, I was of sedentary habits and too weak of muscle to distinguish myself in athletic sports. I had an uncle of a Voltairian turn of mind, who did not at all approve of this. He was a watchmaker, and had reckoned upon me to take on his business. My successes were as gall and wormwood to him, for he quite saw that all this store of Latin was dead against him, and that it would convert me into a pillar of the Church which he disliked. He never lost an opportunity of airing before me his favourite phrase, "a

donkey loaded with Latin." Afterwards, when my writings were published, he had his triumph. I sometimes reproach myself for having contributed to the triumph of M. Homais over his priest. But it cannot be helped, for M. Homais is right. But for M. Homais we should all be burnt at the stake. But as I have said, when one has been at great pains to learn the truth, it is irritating to have to allow that the frivolous, who could never be induced to read a line of St. Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas, are the true sages. It is hard to think that Gavroche and M. Homais attain without an effort the alpine heights of philosophy.

My young compatriot and friend, M. Quellien, a Breton poet full of raciness and originality, the only man of the present day whom I have known to possess the faculty of creating myths, has described this phase of my destiny in a very ingenious style. He says that my soul will dwell, in the shape of a white sea-bird, around the ruined church of St. Michel, an old building struck by lightning which stands above Tréguier. The bird will fly all night with plaintive cries around the barricaded door and windows, seeking to enter the sanctuary, but not knowing that there is a secret door. And so through all eternity my unhappy spirit will moan ceaselessly upon this hill. "It is the spirit of a priest who wants to say mass," one peasant will observe.—"He

will never find a boy to serve it for him," will rejoin another. And that is what I really am—an incomplete priest. Quellien has very clearly discerned what will always be lacking in my church—the chorister boy. My life is like a mass which has some fatality hanging over it, a never-ending *Introibo ad altare Dei* with no one to respond: *Ad Deum qui lætificat juventutem meam.* There is no one to serve my mass for me. In default of any one else I respond for myself, but it is not the same thing.

Thus everything seemed to make for my having a modest ecclesiastical career in Brittany. I should have made a very good priest, indulgent, fatherly, charitable, and of blameless morals. I should have been as a priest what I am as a father, very much loved by my flock, and as easy-going as possible in the exercise of my authority. What are now defects would have been good qualities. Some of the errors which I profess would have been just the thing for a man who identifies himself with the spirit of his calling. I should have got rid of some excrescences which, being only a layman, I have not taken the trouble to remove, easy as it would have been for me to do so. My career would have been as follows: at two-and-twenty professor at the College of Tréguier, and at about fifty canon, or perhaps grand vicar at St. Brieuc, very conscientious, very generally respected, a kind-hearted and gentle

confessor. Little inclined to new dogmas, I should have been bold enough to say with many good ecclesiastics after the Vatican Council : *Posui custodiam ori meo.* My antipathy for the Jesuits would have shown itself by never alluding to them, and a fund of mild Gallicanism would have been veiled beneath the semblance of a profound knowledge of canon law.

An extraneous incident altered the whole current of my life. From the most obscure of little towns in the most remote of provinces I was thrust without preparation into the vortex of all that is most sprightly and alert in Parisian society. The world stood revealed to me, and my self became a double one. The Gascon got the better of the Breton ; there was no more *custodia oris mei*, and I put aside the padlock which I should otherwise have set upon my mouth. In so far as regards my inner self I remained the same. But what a change in the outward show ! Hitherto I had lived in a hypogeum, lighted by smoky lamps ; now I was going to see the sun and the light of day.

THE PETTY SEMINARY OF SAINT NICHOLAS DU CHARDONNET

PART II.

ABOUT the month of April, 1838, M. de Talleyrand, feeling his end draw near, thought it necessary to act a last lie in accordance with human prejudices, and he resolved to be reconciled, in appearance, to a Church whose truth, once acknowledged by him, convicted him of sacrilege and of dishonour. This ticklish job could best be performed, not by a staid priest of the old Gallican school, who might have insisted upon a categorical retractation of errors, upon his making amends and upon his doing penance ; not by a young Ultramontane of the new school, against whom M. de Talleyrand would at once have been very prejudiced, but by a priest who was a man of the world, well-read, very little of a philosopher, and nothing of a theologian, and upon those terms with the ancient classes which alone give the Gospel occasional access to circles for which it is not suited. Abbé Dupanloup, already well known for his success at the Catechism

of the Assumption among a public which set more store by elegant phrases than doctrine, was just the man to play an innocent part in the comedy which simple souls would regard as an edifying act of grace. His intimacy with the Duchesse de Dino, and especially with her daughter, whose religious education he had conducted, the favour in which he was held by M. de Quélen (Archbishop of Paris), and the patronage which from the outset of his career had been accorded him by the Faubourg St. Germain, all concurred to fit him for a work which required more worldly tact than theology, and in which both earth and heaven were to be fooled.

It is said that M. de Talleyrand, remarking a certain hesitation on the part of the priest who was about to convert him, ejaculated: "This young man does not know his business." If he really did make this remark, he was very much mistaken. Never was a priest better up in his calling than this young man. The aged statesman, resolved not to erase his past until the very last hour, met all the entreaties made to him with a sullen "not yet." The *Sto ad ostium et pulso* had to be brought into play with great tact. A fainting-fit, or a sudden acceleration in the progress of the death-agony would be fatal, and too much importunity might bring out a "No" which would upset the plans so skilfully laid. Upon the morning of May 17th, which was the day of his death, nothing was yet

signed. Catholics, as is well known, attach very great importance to the moment of death. If future rewards and punishments have any real existence, it is evident that they must be proportioned to a whole life of virtue or of vice. But the Catholic does not look at it in this light, and an edifying death-bed makes up for all other things. Salvation is left to the chances of the eleventh hour. Time pressed, and it was resolved to play a bold game. M. Dupanloup was waiting in the next room, and he sent the winsome daughter of the Duchesse de Dino, of whom Talleyrand was always so fond, to ask if he might come in. The answer, for a wonder, was in the affirmative, and the priest spent several minutes with him, bringing out from the sick-room a paper signed "Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, Prince de Bénévent."

There was joy—if not in heaven, at all events in the Catholic world of the Faubourgs St. Germain and St. Honoré. The credit of this victory was ascribed, in the main, to the female grace which had succeeded in getting round the aged prince, and inducing him to retract the whole of his revolutionary past, but some of it went to the youthful ecclesiastic who had displayed so much tact in bringing to a satisfactory conclusion a project in which it was so easy to fail. M. Dupanloup was from that day one of the first of French priests. Position, honours, and money were pressed upon him by the wealthy and influential classes in Paris. The

money he accepted, but do not for a moment suppose that it was for himself, as there never was any one so unselfish as M. Dupanloup. The quotation from the Bible which was oftenest upon his lips, and which was doubly a favourite one with him because it was truly Scriptural and happened to terminate like a Latin verse was : *Da mihi animas ; cetera tolle tibi.* He had at that time in his mind the general outlines of a grand propaganda by means of classical and religious education, and he threw himself into it with all the passionate ardour which he displayed in the undertakings upon which he embarked.

The seminary Saint Nicholas du Chardonnet, situated by the side of the church of that name, between the Rue Saint Victor and the Rue de Pontoise, had since the Revolution been the petty seminary for the diocese of Paris. This was not its primitive destination. In the great movement of religious reform which occurred during the first half of the seventeenth century, and to which the names of Vincent de Paul, Olier, Bérulle, and Father Eudes are attached, the church of Saint Nicholas du Chardonnet filled, though in a humbler measure, the same part as Saint Sulpice. The parish of Saint Nicholas, which derived its name from a field of thistles well known to students at the University of Paris in the middle ages, was then the centre of a very wealthy neighbourhood, the principal residents belonging to the magistracy. As Olier founded the St. Sulpice Seminary, so Adrien de

Bourdoise, founded the company of Saint Nicholas du Chardonnet, and made this establishment a nursery for young priests which lasted until the Revolution. It had not, however, like the Saint Sulpice establishment, a number of branch houses in other parts of France. Moreover, the association was not revived after the Revolution like that of Saint Sulpice, and their building in the Rue Saint Victor was untenanted. At the time of the Concordat it was given to the diocese of Paris, to be used as a petty seminary. Up to 1837, this establishment did not make any sort of a name for itself. The brilliant Renaissance of learned and worldly clericalism dates from the decade of 1830-40. During the first third of the century, Saint Nicholas was an obscure religious establishment, the number of students being below the requirements of the diocese, and the level of study a very low one. Abbé Frère, the head of the seminary, though a profound theologian and well versed in the mysticism of the Christian faith, was not in the least suited to rouse and stimulate lads who were engaged in literary study. Saint Nicholas, under his headship, was a thoroughly ecclesiastical establishment; its comparatively few students having a clerical career in view, and the secular side of education was passed over entirely.

M. de Quélen was very well inspired when he entrusted the management of this college to M. Dupanloup. The archbishop was not the man to approve of the strict clericalism of Abbé Frère. He

liked piety, but worldly and well-bred piety, without any scholastic barbarisms or mystic jargon, piety as a complement of the well-bred ideal which, to tell the truth, was his main faith. If Hugues or Richard de Saint Victor had risen up before him in the shape of pedants or boors he would have set little store by them. He was very much attached to M. Dupanloup, who was at that time Legitimist and Ultramontane. It was only the exaggerations of a later day which so changed the parts that he came to be looked upon as a Gallican and an Orleanist. M. de Quélen treated him as a spiritual son, sharing his dislikes and his prejudices. He doubtless knew the secret of his birth. The families which had looked after the young priest, had made him a man of breeding, and admitted him into their exclusive coterie, were those with which the archbishop was intimate, and which formed in his eyes the limits of the universe. I remember seeing M. de Quélen, and he was quite the type of the ideal bishop under the old *régime*. I remember his feminine beauty, his perfect figure, and the easy grace of all his movements. His mind had received no other cultivation than that of a well-educated man of the world. Religion in his eyes was inseparable from good breeding and the modicum of common sense which a classical education is apt to give.

This was about the level of M. Dupanloup's

intellect. He had neither the brilliant imagination which will give a lasting value to certain of Lacordaire's and Montalembert's works, nor the profound passion of Lamennais. In the case of the archbishop and M. Dupanloup, good breeding and polish were the main thing, and the approval of those who stood high in the world was the touch-stone of merit. They knew nothing of theology, which they had studied but little, and for which they thought it enough to express platonic reverence. Their faith was very keen and sincere, but it was a faith which took everything for granted, and which did not busy itself with the dogmas which must be accepted. They knew that scholasticism would not go down with the only public for which they cared—the worldly and somewhat frivolous congregations which sit beneath the preachers at St. Roch or St. Thomas Aquinas.

Such were the views entertained by M. de Quélen when he made over to M. Dupanloup the austere and little known establishment of Abbé Frère and Adrien de Bourdoise. The petty seminary of Paris had hitherto, by virtue of the Concordat, been merely a training school for the clergy of Paris, quite sufficient for its purpose, but strictly confined to the object prescribed by the law. The new superior chosen by the archbishop had far higher aims. He set to work to re-construct the whole fabric, from the

buildings themselves, of which only the old walls were left standing. to the course of teaching, which he re-cast entirely. There were two essential points which he kept before him. In the first place he saw that a petty seminary which was altogether ecclesiastical could not answer in Paris, and would never suffice to recruit a sufficient number of priests for the diocese. He accordingly utilised the information which reached him, especially from the west of France and from his native Savoy, to bring to the college any youths of promise whom he might hear of. Secondly, he determined that the college should become a model place of education instead of being a strict seminary with all the asceticism of a place in which the clerical element was unalloyed. He hoped to let the same course of education serve for the young men studying for the priesthood, and for the sons of the highest families in France. His success in the Rue Saint Florentin (this was where Talleyrand died) had made him a favourite with the Legitimists, and he had several useful friends among the Orleanists. Well posted in all the fashionable changes, and neglecting no opportunity for pushing himself, he was always quick to adapt himself to the spirit of the time. His theory of what the world should be was a very aristocratic one, but he maintained that there were three orders of aristocracy: the nobility, the clergy, and literature. What he wished to insure

was a liberal education, which would be equally suitable for the clergy and for the youths of the Faubourg Saint Germain, based upon Christian piety and classical literature. The study of science was almost entirely excluded, and he himself had not even a smattering of it.

Thus the old house in the Rue Saint Victor was for many years the rendezvous of youths bearing the most famous of French names, and it was considered a very great favour for a young man to obtain admission. The large sums which many rich people paid to secure admission for their sons served to provide a free education for young men without fortune who had shown signs of talent. This testified to the unbounded faith of M. Dupanloup in classical learning. He looked upon these classical studies as part and parcel of religion. He held that youths destined for holy orders and those who were in afterlife to occupy the highest social positions should both receive the same education. Virgil, he thought, should be as much a part of a priest's intellectual training as the Bible. He hoped that the *élite* of his theological students would, by their association upon equal terms with young men of good family, acquire more polish and a higher social tone than can be obtained in seminaries peopled by peasants' sons. He was wonderfully successful in this respect. The college, though consisting of two elements

apparently incongruous, was remarkable for its unity. The knowledge that talent overrode all other considerations prevented anything like jealousy, and by the end of a week the poorest youth from the provinces, awkward and simple as he might be, was envied by the young millionaire—who, little as he might know it, was paying for his schooling—if he had turned out some good Latin verses, or written a clever exercise.

In the year 1836, I was fortunate enough to win all the prizes in my class at the Tréguier College. The *palmares* happened to be seen by one of the enlightened men whom M. Dupanloup employed to recruit his youthful army. My fate was settled in a twinkling, and "Have him sent for" was the order of the impulsive Superior. I was fifteen and a half years old, and we had no time to reflect. I was spending the holidays with a friend in a village near Tréguier, and in the afternoon of the 4th of September I was sent for in haste. I remember my returning home as well as if it was only yesterday. We had a league to travel through the country. The vesper bell with its soft cadence echoing from steeple to steeple awoke a sensation of gentle melancholy, the image of the life which I was about to abandon for ever. The next day I started for Paris; upon the 7th I beheld sights which were as novel for me as if I had been suddenly landed in France from Tahiti or Timbuctoo.

THE PETTY SEMINARY OF SAINT NICHOLAS DU CHARDONNET

PART III.

No Buddhist Lama or Mussulman Fakir, suddenly translated from Asia to the Boulevards of Paris, could have been more taken aback than I was upon being suddenly landed in a place so different from that in which moved my old Breton priests, who, with their venerable heads all wood or granite, remind one of the Osirian colossi which in after life so struck my fancy when I saw them in Egypt, grandiose in their long lines of immemorial calm. My coming to Paris marked the passage from one religion to another. There was as much difference between Christianity as I left it in Brittany and that which I found current in Paris, as there is between a piece of old cloth, as stiff as a board, and a bit of fine cambric. It was not the same religion. My old priests, with their heavy old-fashioned copes, had always seemed to me like the magi, from whose lips came the eternal truths, whereas the new religion to which I was introduced was all

print and calico, a piety decked out with ribbons and scented with musk, a devotion which found expression in tapers and small flower-pots, a young lady's theology without stay or style, as composite as the polychrome frontispiece of one of Lebel's prayer-books.

This was the gravest crisis in my life. The young Breton does not bear transplanting. The keen moral repulsion which I felt, superadded to a complete change in my habits and mode of life, brought on a very severe attack of home-sickness. The confinement to the college was intolerable. The remembrance of the free and happy life which I had hitherto led with my mother went to my very heart. I was not the only sufferer. M. Dupanloup had not calculated all the consequences of his policy. Imperious as a military commander, he did not take into account the deaths and casualties which occurred among his young recruits. We confided our sorrows to one another. My most intimate friend, a young man from Coutances, if I remember right, who had been transported like myself from a happy home, brooded in solitary grief over the change and died. The natives of Savoy were even less easily acclimatised. One of them, who was rather my senior, confessed to me that every evening he calculated the distance from his dormitory on the third floor to the pavement in the street below. I fell ill, and to all appearances was

not likely to recover. The melancholy to which Bretons are so subject took hold of me. The memories of the last notes of the vesper bell which I had heard pealing over our dear hills, and of the last sunset upon our peaceful plains, pricked me like pointed darts.

According to every rule of medicine I ought to have died; and it is perhaps a pity that I did not. Two friends whom I brought with me from Brittany, in the following year gave this clear proof of fidelity. They could not accustom themselves to this new world, and they left it. I sometimes think that the Breton part of me did die; the Gascon, unfortunately, found sufficient reason for living! The latter discovered, too, that this new world was a very curious one, and was well worth clinging to. It was to him who had put me to this severe test that I owed my escape from death. I am indebted to M. Dupanloup for two things: for having brought me to Paris, and for having saved me from dying when I got there. He naturally did not concern himself much about me at first. The most eagerly sought after priest in Paris, with an establishment of two hundred students to superintend or rather to found, could not be expected to take any deep personal interest in an obscure youth. A peculiar incident formed a bond between us. The real cause of my suffering was the ever-present souvenir of my mother. Having always lived alone with her, I could not tear myself away from the recollection of the

peaceful, happy life which I had led year after year. I had been happy, and I had been poor with her. A thousand details of this very poverty, which absence made all the more touching, searched out my very heart. At night I was always thinking of her, and I could get no sleep. My only consolation was to write her letters full of tender feeling and moist with tears. Our letters, as is the usage in religious establishments, were read by one of the masters. He was so struck by the tone of deep affection which pervaded my boyish utterances that he showed one of them to M. Dupanloup, who was very much surprised when he read it.

The noblest trait in M. Dupanloup's character was his affection for his mother. Though his birth was, in one way, the greatest trouble of his life, he worshipped his mother. She lived with him, and though we never saw her, we knew that he always spent so much time with her every day. He often said that a man's worth is to be measured by the respect he pays to his mother. He gave us excellent advice upon this head which I never failed to follow, as, for instance, never to address her in the second person singular, or to end a letter without using the word *respect.* This created a connecting link between us. My letter was shown to him on a Friday, upon which evening the reports for the week were always read out before him. I had not,

upon that occasion, done very well with my composition, being only fifth or sixth. "Ah!" he said, "if the subject had been that of a letter which I read this morning, Ernest Renan would have been first." From that time forth he noticed me. He recognised the fact of my existence, and I regarded him, as we all did, as a principle of life, a sort of god. One worship took the place of another, and the sentiment inspired by my early teachers gradually died out.

Only those who knew Saint Nicholas du Chardonnet during the brilliant period from 1838 to 1844 can form an adequate idea of the intense life which prevailed there.[1] And this life had only one source, one principle: M. Dupanloup himself. The whole work fell on his shoulders. Regulations, usage administration, the spiritual and temporal government of the college, were all centred in him. The college was full of defects, but he made up for them all. As a writer and an orator he was only second-rate, but as an educator of youth he had no equal. The old rules of Saint Nicholas du Chardonnet provided, as in all other seminaries, that half an hour should be devoted every evening to what was known as spiritual reading. Before M. Dupanloup's time, the readings were from some ascetic book such as the *Lives of the*

[1] A very graphic description of it has been given by M. Adolphe Morillon in his *Souvenirs de Saint-Nicolas*. Paris. Licoffre.

Fathers in the Desert, but he took this half hour for himself, and every evening he put himself into direct communication with all his pupils by the medium of a familiar conversation, which was so natural and unrestrained that it might often have borne comparison with the homilies of John Chrysostom in the Palæa of Antioch. Any incident in the inner life of the college, any occurrence directly concerning himself or one of the pupils furnished the theme for a brief and lively soliloquy. The reading of the reports on Friday was still more dramatic and personal, and we all anticipated that day with a mixture of hope and apprehension. The observations with which he interlarded the reading of the notes were charged with life and death. There was no mode of punishment in force; the reading of the notes and the reflections which he made upon them being the sole means which he employed to keep us all on the *qui vive*. This system, doubtless, had its drawbacks. Worshipped by his pupils, M. Dupanloup was not always liked by his fellow-workers. I have been told that it was the same in his diocese, and that he was always a greater favourite with his laymen than with his priests. There can be no doubt that he put everp one about him into the background. But his very violence made us like him, for we felt that all his thoughts were concentrated on us. He was without an equal in the art of rousing his pupils to exertion, and of getting

the maximum amount of work out of each. Each pupil had a distinct existence in his mind, and for each one of them he was an ever-present stimulus to work. He set great store by talent, and treated it as the groundwork of faith. He often said that a man's worth must be measured by his faculty for admiration. His own admiration was not always very enlightened or scientific, but it was prompted by a generous spirit, and a heart really glowing with the love of the beautiful. He was the Villemain of the Catholic school, and M. Villemain was the friend whom he loved and appreciated the most among laymen. Every time he had seen him, he related the conversation which they had together in terms of the warmest sympathy.

The defects of his own mind were reflected in the education which he imparted. He was not sufficiently rational or scientific. It might have been thought that his two hundred pupils were all destined to be poets, writers, and orators. He set little value on learning without talent. This was made very clear at the entrance of the Nicolaïtes to St. Sulpice, where talent was held of no account, and where scholasticism and erudition alone were prized. When it came to a question of doing an exercise of logic or philosophy in barbarous Latin, the students of St. Nicholas, who had been fed upon more delicate literature, could not stomach such coarse food. They were not, there-

fore, much liked at St. Sulpice, to which M. Dupanloup, was never appointed, as he was considered to be too little of a theologian. When an ex-student of St. Nicholas ventured to speak of his former school, the old tutors would remark: "Oh, yes! in the time of M. Bourdoise," as much as to say that the seventeenth century was the period during which this establishment achieved its celebrity.

Whatever its shortcomings in some respects, the education given at St. Nicholas was of a very high literary standard. Clerical education has this superiority over a university education, that it is absolutely independent in everything which does not relate to religion. Literature is discussed under all its aspects, and the yoke of classical dogma sits much more lightly. This is how it was that Lamartine, whose education and training were altogether clerical, was far more intelligent than any university man; and when this is followed by philosophical emancipation, the result is a very frank and unbiased mind. I completed my classical education without having read Voltaire, but I knew the *Soirées de St. Pétersbourg* by heart, and its style, the defects of which I did not discover until much later, had a very stimulating effect upon me.

The discussions on romanticism, then so fierce in the world outside, found their way into the college and all our talk was of Lamartine and Victor Hugo.

The superior joined in with them, and for nearly a year they were the sole topic of our spiritual readings. M. Dupanloup did not go all the way with the champions of romanticism, but he was much more with them than against them. Thus it was that I came to know of the struggles of the day. Later still, the *solvuntur objecta* of the theologians enabled me to attain liberty of thought. The thorough good faith of the ancient ecclesiastical teaching consisted in not dissimulating the force of any objection, and as the answers were generally very weak, a clever person could work out the truth for himself.

I learnt much, too, from the course of lectures on history. Abbé Richard[1] gave these lectures in the spirit of the modern school and with marked ability. For some reason or other his lectures were interrupted, and his place was taken by a tutor, who with many other engagements on hand, merely read to us some old notes, interspersed with extracts from modern books. Among these modern volumes, which often formed a striking contrast with the jog-trot old notes, there was one which produced a very singular effect upon me. Whenever he began to read from it I was incapable of taking a single note, my whole being seeming to thrill with intoxicating harmony. The book was Michelet's *Histoire de France*, the passages

[1] See the excellent memoir by M. Foulon (now Archbishop of Besançon) upon Abbé Richard.

which so affected me being in the fifth and sixth volumes. Thus the modern age penetrated into me as through all the fissures of a cracked cement. I had come to Paris with a complete moral training, but ignorant to the last degree. I had everything to learn. It was a great surprise for me when I found that there was such a person as a serious and learned layman. I discovered that antiquity and the Church are not everything in this world, and especially that contemporary literature was well worthy of attention. I ceased to look upon the death of Louis XIV. as marking the end of the world. I became imbued with ideas and sentiments which had no expression in antiquity or in the seventeenth century.

So the germ which was in me began to sprout. Distasteful as it was in many respects to my nature, this education had the effect of a chemical reagent, and stirred all the life and activity that was in me. For the essential thing in education is not the doctrine taught, but the arousing of the faculties. In proportion as the foundations of my religious faith had been shaken by finding the same names applied to things so different, so did my mind greedily swallow the new beverage prepared for it. The world broke in upon me. Despite its claim to be a refuge to which the stir of the outside world never penetrated, St. Nicholas was at this period the most brilliant and worldly house in Paris. The atmosphere of Paris—minus, let me add

its corruptions—penetrated by door and window; Paris with its pettiness and its grandeur, its revolutionary force and its lapses into flabby indifference. My old Brittany priests knew much more Latin and mathematics than my new masters ; but they lived in the catacombs, bereft of light and air. Here, the atmosphere of the age had free course. In our walks to Gentilly of an evening we engaged in endless discussions. I could never sleep of a night after that ; my head was full of Hugo and Lamartine. I understood what glory was after having vaguely expected to find it in the roof of the chapel at Tréguier. In the course of a short time a very great revelation was borne in upon me. The words talent, brilliancy, and reputation, conveyed a meaning to me. The modest ideal which my earliest teachers had inculcated faded away ; I had embarked upon a sea agitated by all the storms and currents of the age. These currents and gales were bound to drive my vessel towards a coast whither my former friends would tremble to see me land.

My performances in class were very irregular. Upon one occasion I wrote an *Alexander*, which must be in the prize exercise book, and which I would reprint if I had it by me. But purely rhetorical compositions were very distasteful to me ; I could never make a decent speech. Upon one prize-day we got up a representation of the Council of

Clermont, and the various speeches suitable to the occasion were allotted by competition. I was a miserable failure as Peter the Hermit and Urban II.; my Godefroy de Bouillon was pronounced to be utterly devoid of military ardour. A warlike song in Sapphic and Adonic stanzas created a more favourable impression. My refrain *Sternite Turcas*, a short and sharp solution of the Eastern Question, was selected for recital in public. I was too staid for these childish proceedings. We were often set to write a Middle Age tale, terminating with some striking miracle, and I was far too fond of selecting the cure of lepers. I often thought of my early studies in mathematics, in which I was pretty well advanced, and I spoke of it to my fellow students, who were much amused at the idea, for mathematics stood very low in their estimation, compared to the literary studies which they looked upon as the highest expression of human intelligence. My reasoning powers only revealed themselves later, while studying philosophy at Issy. The first time that my fellow pupils heard me argue in Latin they were surprised. They saw at once that I was of a different race from themselves, and that I should still be marching forward when they had reached the bounds set for them. But in rhetoric I did not stand so well. I looked upon it as a pure waste of time and ingenuity to write when one has no thoughts of one's own to express.

The groundwork of ideas upon which education at St. Nicholas was based was shallow, but it was brilliant upon the surface, and the elevation of feeling which pervaded the whole system was another notable feature. I have said that no kind of punishment was administered ; or, to speak more accurately, there was only one, expulsion. Except in cases where some grave offence had been committed, there was nothing degrading in being dismissed. No particular reason was alleged, the superior saying to the student who was sent away : " You are a very worthy young man, but your intelligence is not of the turn we require. Let us part friends. Is there any service I can do you ?" The favour of being allowed to share in an education considered to be so exceptionally good was thought so much of that we dreaded an announcement of this kind like a sentence of death. This is one of the secrets of the superiority of ecclesiastical over state colleges ; their *régime* is much more liberal, for none of the students are there by right, and coercion must inevitably lead to separation. There is something cold and hard about the schools and colleges of the state, while the fact of a student having secured by a competitive examination an inalienable right to his place in them, is an infallible source of weakness. For my own part I have never been able to understand how the master of a normal school, for instance, manages, inasmuch as he is unable to say,

without further explanation, to the pupils who are unsuited for their vocation : " You have not the bent of intelligence for our calling, but I have no doubt that you are a very good lad, and that you will get on better elsewhere. Good-bye." Even the most trifling punishment implies a servile principle of obedience from fear. So far as I am myself concerned, I do not think that at any period of my life I have been obedient. I have, I know, been docile and submissive, but it has been to a spiritual principle, not to a material force wielding the dread of punishment. My mother never ordered me to do a thing. The relations between my ecclesiastical teachers and myself were entirely free and spontaneous. Whoever has had experience of this *rationabile obsequium* cannot put up with any other. An order is a humiliation ; whosoever has to obey is a *capitis minor* sullied on the very threshold of the higher life. Ecclesiastical obedience has nothing lowering about it ; for it is voluntary, and those who do not get on together can separate. In one of my Utopian dreams of an aristocratic society, I have provided that there should only be one penalty, death ; or rather, that all serious offences should be visited by a reprimand from the recognised authorities which no man of honour would survive. I should never have done to be a soldier, for I should either have deserted or committed suicide. I am afraid that the new military institutions which

do not leave a place for any exceptions or equivalents will have a very lowering moral effect. To compel every one to obey is fatal to genius and talent. The man who has passed years in the carriage of arms after the German fashion is dead to all delicate work whether of the hand or brain. Thus it is that Germany would be devoid of all talent since she has been engrossed in military pursuits, but for the Jews, to whom she is so ungrateful.

The generation which was from fifteen to twenty years of age, at the brilliant but fleeting epoch of which I am speaking, is now between fifty-five and sixty. It will be asked whether this generation has realised the unbounded hopes which the ardent spirit of our great preceptor had conceived. The answer must unquestionably be in the negative, for if these hopes had been fulfilled the face of the world would have been completely changed. M. Dupanloup was too little in love with his age, and too uncompromising to its spirit, to mould men in accordance with the temper of the time. When I recall one of these spiritual readings during which the master poured out the treasures of his intelligence, the class-room with its serried benches upon which clustered two hundred lads hushed in attentive respect, and when I set myself to inquire whither have fled the two hundred souls, so closely bound together by the ascendency of one man, I count more than one case of waste and

eccentricity; as might be expected, I can count archbishops, bishops, and other dignitaries of the Church, all to a certain extent enlightened and moderate in their views. I come upon diplomatists, councillors of state, and others, whose honourable careers would in some instances have been more brilliant if Marshal MacMahon's dismissal of his ministry on the 16th of May, 1877, had been a success. But, strange to say, I see among those who sat beside a future prelate a young man destined to sharpen his knife so well that he will drive it home to his archbishop's heart. . . . I think I can remember Verger, and I may say of him as Sachetti said of the beatified Florentine: *Fu mia vicina, andava come le altre.* The education given us had its dangers; it had a tendency to produce over excitement, and to turn the balance of the mind, as it did in Verger's case.

A still more striking instance of the saying that "the spirit bloweth where it listeth" was that of H. de ——. When I first entered at Saint-Nicholas he was the object of my special admiration. He was a youth of exceptional talent, and he was a long way ahead of all his comrades in rhetoric. His staid and elevated piety sprung from a nature endowed with the loftiest aspirations. He quite came up to our idea of perfection, and, according to the custom of ecclesiastical colleges, in which the senior pupils share the duties of the masters, the most important of these

functions were confided to him. His piety was equally great for several years at the seminary of St. Sulpice. He would remain for hours in the chapel, especially on holy days, bathed in tears. I well remember one summer evening at Gentilly—which was the country-house of the Petty Seminary of Saint-Nicholas—how we clustered round some of the senior students and one of the masters noted for his Christian piety, listening intently to what they told us. The conversation had taken a very serious turn, the question under discussion being the ever-enduring problem upon which all Christianity rests—the question of divine election—the doubt, in which each individual soul must stand until the last hour, whether he will be saved. The good priest dwelt specially upon this, telling us that no one can be sure, however great may be the favours which Heaven has showered upon him, that he will not fall away at the last. "I think," he said, "that I have known one case of predestination." There was a hush, and after a pause he added; "I mean H. de ——; if any one is sure of being saved, it is he. And yet who can tell that H. de —— is not a reprobate?" I saw H. de —— again many years afterwards. He had in the interval studied the Bible very deeply. I could not tell whether he was entirely estranged from Christianity, but he no longer wore the priestly garb, and was very bitter against clericalism. When I met him later still I found that he had

become a convert to extreme democratic ideas, and, with the passionate exaltation which was the principal trait in his character, he was bent upon inaugurating the reign of justice. His head was full of America, and I think that he must be there now. A few years ago one of our old comrades told me that he had read a name not unlike his among the list of men shot for participation in the Communist insurrection of 1871. I think that he was mistaken, but there can be no doubt that the career of poor H. de —— was shipwrecked by some great storm. His many high qualities were neutralised by his passionate temper. He was by far the most gifted of my fellow-pupils at Saint-Nicholas. But he had not the good sense to keep cool in politics. A man who behaved as he did might get shot twenty times. Idealists like us must be very careful how we play with those tools. We are very likely to leave our heads or our wing-feathers behind us. The temptation for a priest who has thrown up the Church to become a democrat is very strong, beyond doubt, for by so doing he regains colleagues and friends, and in reality merely exchanges one sect for another. Such was the fate of Lamennais. One of the wisest acts of Abbé Loyson has been the resistance of this temptation and his refusal to accept the advances which the extreme party always makes to those who have broken away from official ties.

For three years I was subjected to this profound influence, which brought about a complete transformation in my being. M. Dupanloup had literally transfigured me. The poor little country lad struggling vainly to emerge from his shell, had been developed into a young man of ready and quick intelligence. There was, I know, one thing wanting in my education, and until that void was filled up I was very cramped in my powers. The one thing lacking was positive science, the idea of a critical search after truth. This superficial humanism kept my reasoning powers fallow for three years, while at the same time it wore away the early candour of my faith. My Christianity was being worn away, though there was nothing as yet in my mind which could be styled doubt. I went every year, during the holidays, into Brittany. Notwithstanding more than one painful struggle, I soon became my old self again just as my early masters had fashioned me.

In accordance with the general rule I went, after completing my rhetoric at Saint-Nicholas du Chardonnet, to Issy, the country branch of the St. Sulpice seminary. Thus I left M. Dupanloup for an establishment in which the discipline was diametrically opposed to that of Saint-Nicholas. The first thing which I was taught at St. Sulpice was to regard as childish nonsense the very things which M Dupanloup had told me to prize the most. What,

I was taught, could be simpler? If Christianity is a revealed truth, should not the chief occupation of the Christian be the study of that revelation, in other words of theology? Theology and the study of the Bible absorbed my whole time, and furnished me with the true reasons for believing in Christianity and for not adhering to it. For four years a terrible struggle went on within me, until at last the phrase, which I had long put away from me as a temptation of the devil, "It is not true," would not be denied. In describing this inward combat and the Seminary of St. Sulpice itself, which is further removed from the present age than if encircled by thousands of leagues of solitude, I will endeavour also to show how I arose from the direct study of Christianity, undertaken in the most serious spirit, without sufficient faith to be a sincere priest, and yet with too much respect for it to permit of my trifling with faiths so worthy of that respect.

THE ISSY SEMINARY.

THE ISSY SEMINARY

PART I.

THE Petty Seminary of Saint-Nicholas du Chardonnet had no philosophical course, philosophy being, in accordance with the division of ecclesiastical studies, reserved for the great seminary. After having finished my classical education in the establishment so ably directed by M. Dupanloup, I was, with the students in my class, passed into the great seminary, which is set apart for an exclusively ecclesiastical course of teaching. The grand seminary for the diocese of Paris is St. Sulpice, which consists of two houses, one in Paris and the other at Issy, where the students devote two years to philosophy. These two seminaries form, in reality, one. The one is the outcome of the other, and they are both conjoined at certain times ; the congregation from which the masters are selected is the same. St. Sulpice exercised so great an influence over me, and so definitely decided the whole course of my life, that I must

perforce sketch its history, and explain its principles and tendencies, so as to show how they have continued to be the mainspring of all my intellectual and moral development.

St. Sulpice owes its origin to one whose name has not attained any great celebrity, for celebrity rarely seeks out those who make a point of avoiding notoriety, and whose predominant characteristic is modesty. Jean-Jacques Olier, member of a family which supplied the state with many trusty servitors, was the contemporary of, and a fellow-worker with, Vincent de Paul, Bêrulle, Adrien de Bourdoise, Père Eudes, and Charles de Gondren, founders of congregations for the reform of ecclesiastical education, who played a prominent part in the preparatory reforms of the seventeenth century. During the reign of Henri IV. and in the early years of the reign of Louis XIII., the morality of the clergy was at the lowest possible point. The fanaticism of the League, far from serving to make their morality more rigorous, had just the contrary effect. Priests thought that because they shouldered musket and carbine in the good cause they were at liberty to do as they liked. The racy humour which prevailed during the reign of Henri IV. was anything but favourable to mysticism. There was a good side to the outspoken Rabelaisian gaiety which was not deemed, in that day, incompatible with the priestly

calling. In many ways we prefer the bright and witty piety of Pierre Camus, a friend of François de Sales, to the rigid and affected attitude which the French clergy has since assumed, and which has converted them into a sort of black army, holding aloof from the rest of the world and at war with it. But there can be no doubt that about the year 1640 the education of the clergy was not in keeping with the spirit of regularity and moderation which was becoming more and more the law of the age. From the most opposite directions came a cry for reform. François de Sales admitted that he had not been successful in this attempt, and he told Bourdoise that "after having laboured during seventeen years to train only three such priests as I wanted to assist me in reforming the clergy of my diocese, I have only succeeded in forming one and-a-half." Following upon him came the men of grave and reasonable piety whom I named above. By means of congregations of a fresh type, distinct from the old monkish rules and in some points copied from the Jesuits, they created the seminary, that is to say the well-walled nursery in which young clerks could be trained and formed. The transformation was far extending. The schools of these powerful teachers of the spiritual life turned out a body of men representing the best disciplined, the most orderly, the most national, and it may be added, the most highly educated clergy ever seen—a clergy

which illustrated the second half of the seventeenth century and the whole of the eighteenth, and the last of whose representatives have only disappeared within the last forty years. Concurrently with these exertions of orthodox piety arose Port-Royal, which was far superior to St. Sulpice, to St. Lazare, to the Christian doctrine, and even to the Oratoire, as regarded consistency in reasoning and talent in writing, but which lacked the most essential of Catholic virtues, docility. Port-Royal, like Protestantism, passed through every phase of misfortune. It was distasteful to the majority, and was always in opposition. When you have excited the antipathy of your country you are too often led to take a dislike to your country. The persecuted one is doubly to be pitied, for, in addition to the suffering which he endures, persecution affects him morally; it rarely fails to warp the mind and to shrink the heart.

Olier occupies a place apart in this group of Catholic reformers. His mysticism is of a kind peculiar to himself. His *Cathéchisme chrétien pour la Vie intérieure,* which is scarcely ever read outside St. Sulpice, is a most remarkable book, full of poesy and sombre philosophy, wavering from first to last between Louis de Léon and Spinoza. Olier's ideal of the Christian life is what he calls "the state of death."

"What is the state of death?—It is a state during

which the heart cannot be moved to its depths, and though the world displays to it its beauties, its honours, and its riches, the effect is the same as if it offered them to a corpse, which remains motionless, and devoid of all desire, insensible to all that goes on. . . . The corpse may be agitated outwardly, and have some movement of the body; but this agitation is all on the surface; it does not come from the inner man, which is without life, vigour, or strength. Thus a soul which is dead within may easily be attached by external things and be disturbed outwardly; but in its inner self it remains dead and motionless to whatever may happen."

Nor is this all. Olier imagines as far superior to the state of death the state of burial.

"Death retains the appearance of the world and of the flesh; the dead man seems to be still a part of Adam. He is now and again moved; he continues to afford the world some pleasure. But the buried body is forgotten, and no longer ranks with men. He is noisome and horrible; he is bereft of all that pleases the eye; he is trodden under foot in a cemetery without compunction, so convinced is every one that he is nothing, and that he is rooted from among the number of men."

The sombre fancies of Calvin are as Pelagian optimism compared to the horrible nightmares which original sin evokes in the brain of the pious recluse.

"Could you add anything to drive more closely home the conception as to how the flesh is only sin? It is so completely sin that it is all intent and motion towards sin, and even to every kind of sin; so much so, that if the Holy Ghost did not restrain our souls and succour us with His grace, it would be carried away by all the inclinations of the flesh, all of which tend to sin.

"What is then the flesh?—It is the effect of sin; it is the principle of sin.

"If that is so, how comes it that you did not fall away every hour into sin?—It is the mercy of God which keeps us from it. . . . I am, therefore, indebted to God if I do not commit every kind of sin?—Yes. . . this is the general feeling of the saints, because the flesh is drawn down towards sin by such a heavy weight that God alone can prevent it from falling.

"But will you kindly tell me something more about this?—All I can tell you is that there is no conceivable kind of sin, no imperfection, disorder, error, or unruliness of which the flesh is not full, just as there is no levity, folly, or stupidity of which the flesh is not capable at any moment.

"What, I should be mad, and comport myself like a madman in the highways and byways, but for the help of God?—That is a small matter, and a question of common decency; but you must know that

without the grace of God and the virtue of His Spirit, there is no impurity, meanness, infamy, drunkenness, blasphemy, or other kind of sin to which man would not give himself over.

"The flesh is very corrupt then?—You see that it is.

"I cannot wonder therefore that you tell us we must hate our flesh and hold our own bodies in horror; and that man, in his present condition, is fated to be accursed, vilified and persecuted.—No, I can no longer feel surprise at this. In truth, there is no form of misfortune and suffering but which he may expect his flesh to bring down upon him. You are right; all the hatred, malediction, and persecution which beset the demon must also beset the flesh and all its motions.

"There is, then, no extremity of insult too great to be put up with and to be looked upon as deserved? —No.

"Contempt, insult, and calumny should not then disturb our peace of mind?—No. We should behave like the saint of former days, who was led to the scaffold for a crime which he had not committed, and from which he would not attempt to exculpate himself, as he said to himself that he should have been guilty of this crime and of many far worse but for the preventing grace of God.

"Men, angels, and God Himself ought, therefore

to persecute us without ceasing? Yes, so it ought to be.

"What! do you mean to say that sinners ought to be poor and bereft of everything, like the demons? —Yes, and more than that. Sinners ought to be placed under an interdict in regard to all their corporal and spiritual faculties, and bereft of all the gifts of God."

A hero of Christian humility, Olier was acting as he thought for the best in making a mock of human nature and dragging it through the mire. He had visions, and was favoured with inner revelations of which the autographic account, written for his director, is still at St. Sulpice. He stops short in his writing to make such reflections as these: "My courage is at times utterly cast down when I see what impertinences I have been writing. They must, I think, be a great waste of time for my good director, whom I am afraid of amusing. I pity him for having to spend his time in reading them, and it seems to me that he ought to stop my writing this intolerable frivolity and impertinence."

But Olier, like nearly all the mystics, was not merely a strange dreamer, but a powerful organizer. Entering very young into holy orders, he was appointed, through the influence of his family, priest of the parish of St. Sulpice, which was then attached to the Abbey of Saint-Germain des Près. His tender and

susceptible piety took umbrage at many things which had hitherto been looked upon as harmless—for instance, at a tavern situated in the charnel-house of the church and frequented by the choristers. His ideal was a clergy after his own image—pious, zealous, and attached to their duties. Many other saintly personages were labouring towards the same end, but Olier set to work in very original fashion. Adrien de Bourdoise alone took the same view as he did of ecclesiastical reform. What was truly novel in the idea of these two founders was to try and effect the improvement of the secular clergy by means of institutions for priests mixing with the world and combining the cure of souls with the training of students for the Church.

Olier and Bourdoise accordingly, while carrying on the work of reform, and becoming heads of religious congregations, remained parish priests of St. Sulpice and Saint-Nicholas du Chardonnet. The seminary had its origin in the assembling together of the priests into communities, and these communities became schools of clericalism, homes in which young men destined for the Church were piously trained for it. What facilitated the creation of these establishments and made them innocuous to the state was that they had no resident tutors. All the theological tutors were at the Sorbonne, and the young men from St. Sulpice and St. Nicholas, who were

studying theology, went there for their lectures. Thus the system of teaching remained national and common to all. The seclusion of the seminary only applied to the moral discipline and religious duties. This was the equivalent of the practice now prevalent among the boarding-schools which send their pupils to the Lycée. There was only one course of theology in Paris, and that was the official one at the Faculty. The work in the interior of the seminary was confined to repetitions and lectures. It is true that this rule soon became obsolete. I have heard it said by old students of St. Sulpice that towards the end of last century they went very little to the Sorbonne, that the general opinion was that there was little to be learnt there, and that the private lessons in the seminary quite took the place of the official lecture. This organisation was very similar, as may be seen, to that which now obtains in the Normal School and regulates its relations with the Sorbonne. Subsequent to the Concordat the whole of the education of the seminaries was given within the walls. Napoleon did not think it worth while to revive the monopoly of the Theological Faculty. This could only have been effected by obtaining from the Court of Rome a canonical institution, and this the Imperial Government did not care to have. M. Emery, moreover, took good care never to suggest such a step. He had anything but a favourable recollection of the

old system, and very much preferred keeping his young men under his own control. The lectures *intra muros* thus became the regular course of teaching. Nevertheless, as change is a thing unknown at St. Sulpice, the old names remain what they were. The seminary has no professors; all the members of the congregation have the uniform title of director.

The company founded by Olier retained until the Revolution its repute for modesty and practical virtue. Its achievements in theology were somewhat insignificant, as it had not the lofty independence of Port-Royal. It went too far into Molinism, and did not avoid the paltry meanness which is, so to speak, the outcome of the rigid ideas of the orthodox and a set-off against his good qualities. The ill-humour of Saint Simon against these pious priests is, however, carried too far. They were, in the great ecclesiastical army, the non-commissioned officers and drill-sergeants, and it would have been absurd to expect from them the high breeding of general officers. The company exercised through its numerous provincial houses a decisive influence upon the education of the French clergy, while in Canada it acquired a sort of religious suzerainty which harmonised very well with the English rule—so well-disposed towards ancient rights and custom, and which has lasted down to our own day.

The Revolution did not have any effect upon

St. Sulpice. A man of cool and resolute character, such as the company always numbered among its members, reconstructed it upon the very same basis. M. Emery, a very learned and moderately Gallican priest, so completely gained Napoleon's confidence that he obtained from him the necessary authorisations. He would have been very much surprised if he had been told that the fact of making such a demand was a base concession to the civil power, and a sort of impiety. Thus things recurred to their old groove as they were before the Revolution, the door moved on its old hinges, and as from Olier to the Revolution there had not been any change, the seventeenth century had still a resting-place in one corner of Paris.

St. Sulpice continued amid surroundings so different, to be what it had always been before—moderate and respectful towards the civil power, and to hold aloof from politics.[1] With its legal status thoroughly assured, thanks to the judicious measures taken by M. Emery, St. Sulpice was blind to all that went on in the world outside. After the Revolution of 1830, there was some little stir in the college. The echo of the heated discussions of the day sometimes pierced its walls, and the speeches of M. Mauguin—I am sure I don't know why—were special favourites

[1] I am speaking of the years from 1842 to 1845. I believe that it is the same still.

with the junior students. One of them took an opportunity of reading to the superior, M. Duclaux, an extract from a debate which had struck him as being more violent than usual. The old priest, wrapped up in his own reflections, had scarcely listened. When the student had finished, he awoke from his lethargy, and shaking him by the hand, observed: "It is very clear, my lad, that these men do not say their orisons." The remark has often recalled itself to me of late in connection with certain speeches. What a light is let in upon many points by the fact that M. Clémenceau does not probably say his orisons!

These imperturbable old men were very indifferent to what went on in the world, which to their mind was a barrel-organ continually repeating the same tune. Upon one occasion there was a good deal of commotion upon the Place St. Sulpice, and one of the professors, whose feelings were not so well under control as those of his colleagues, wanted them all "to go to the chapel and die in a body." "I don't see the use of that," was the reply of one of his colleagues, and the professors continued their constitutional walk under the colonnade of the courtyard.

Amid the religious difficulties of the time, the priests of St. Sulpice preserved an equally neutral and sagacious attitude, the only occasions upon which they betrayed anything like warmth of feeling being

when the episcopal authority was threatened. They soon found out the spitefulness of M. de Lamennais, and would have nothing to do with him. The theological romanticism of Lacordaire and of Montalembert was not much more appreciated by them, the dogmatic ignorance and the very weak reasoning powers of this school indisposing them against it. They were fully alive to the danger of Catholic journalism. Ultramontanism they at first looked upon as merely a convenient method of appealing to a distant and often ill-informed authority from one nearer at hand, and less easy to inveigle. The older members, who had gone through their studies at the Sorbonne before the Revolution, were uncompromising partisans of the four propositions of 1682. Bossuet was their oracle on every point. One of the most respected of the directors, M. Boyer, had, while at Rome, a long argument with Pope Gregory XVI. upon the Gallican propositions. He asserted that the Pope could not answer his arguments. He detracted, it is true, from the significance of his success by admitting that no one in Rome took him *au sérieux*, and the residents in the Vatican made sport of him as being "an antediluvian." It is a pity that they did not pay more heed to what he said. A complete change took place about 1840. The older members whose training dated from before the Revolution were dead, and the younger ones nearly all rallied

to the doctrine of papal infallibility ; but there was, despite of that, a great gulf between these Ultramontanes of the eleventh hour and the impetuous deriders of Scholasticism and the Gallican Church who were enrolled under the banner of Lamennais. St. Sulpice never went so far as they did in trampling recognised rules under foot.

It cannot be denied that mingled with all this there was a certain amount of antipathy against talent, and of resentment at interference with the routine of the schoolmen disturbed in their old-fashioned doctrines by troublesome innovators. But there was at the same time a good deal of practical tact in the rules followed by these prudent directors. They saw the danger of being more royalist than the king, and they knew how easy was the transition from one extreme to the other. Men less exempt than they were, from anything like vanity, would have exulted when Lamennais, the master of these brilliant paradoxes, who had represented them as being guilty of heresy and lukewarmness for the Holy See, himself became a heretic, and accused the Church of Rome of being the tomb of human souls and the mother of error. Age must not attempt to ape the ways of youth under penalty of being treated with disrespect.

It is on account of this frankness that St. Sulpice represents all that is most upright in religion. No attenuation of the dogmas of Scripture was allowed

at St. Sulpice ; the fathers, the councils, and the doctors were looked upon as the sources of Christianity. Proof of the divinity of Christ was not sought in Mohammed or the battle of Marengo. These theological buffooneries, which by force of impudence and eloquence extorted admiration in Notre-Dame, had no such effect upon these serious-minded Christians. They never thought that the dogma had any need to be toned down, veiled, or dressed up to suit the taste of modern France. They showed themselves deficient in the critical faculty in supposing that the Catholicism of the theologians was the self-same religion of Jesus and the prophets ; but they did not invent for the use of the worldly, a Christianity revised and adapted to their ideas. This is why the serious study—may I even add, the reform—of Christianity is more likely to proceed from St. Sulpice than from the teachings of M. Lacordaire or M. Gratry, and *a fortiori*, from that of M. Dupanloup, in which all its doctrines are toned down, contorted, and blunted ; in which Christianity is never represented as it was conceived by the Council of Trent or the Vatican Council, but as a thing without frame or bone, and with all its essence taken from it. The conversions which are made by preaching of this kind do no good either to religion or to the mind. Conversions of this kind do not make Christians, but they warp the mind and unfit men for public business. There is nothing so mischievous

as the vague; it is even worse than what is false. "Truth," as Bacon has well observed, "is derived from error rather than from confusion."

Thus, amid the pretentious pathos which in our day has found its way into the Christian Apologia, has been preserved a school of solid doctrine, averse to all show and repugnant to success. Modesty has ever been the special attribute of the Company of St. Sulpice; this is why it has never attached any importance to literature, excluding it almost entirely. The rule of the St. Sulpice Company is to publish everything anonymously, and to write in the most unpretending and retiring style possible. They see clearly the vanity, and the drawbacks of talent, and they will have none of it. The word which best characterises them is mediocrity, but then their mediocrity is systematic and self-planned. Michelet has described the alliance between the Jesuits and the Sulpicians as "a marriage between death and vacuum." This is no doubt true, but Michelet failed to see that in this case the vacuum is loved for its own sake. There is something touching about a vacuum created by men who will not think for fear of thinking ill. Literary error is in their eyes the most dangerous of errors, and it is just on this account that they excel in the true style of writing. St. Sulpice is now the only place where, as formerly at Port-Royal, the style of writing possesses that absolute forgetfulness of form which is

the proof of sincerity. It never occurred to the masters that among their pupils must be a writer or an orator. The principle which they insisted upon the most earnestly was never to make any reference to self, and if one had anything to say, to say it plainly and in undertones. It was all very well for you, my worthy masters, with that total ignorance of the world which does you so much honour, to take this view ; but if you knew how little encouragement the world gives to modesty, you would see how difficult it is for literature to act up to your principles. What would modesty have done for M. de Chateaubriand ? You were right to be severe upon the stagey ways of a theology reduced so low as to bid for applause by resorting to worldly tactics. But what does one ever hear of your theology ? It has only one defect, but that is a serious one ; it is dead. Your literary principles were like the rhetoric of Chrysippus, of which Cicero said that it was excellent for teaching the way of silence. Whoever speaks or writes for the public ear or eye must inevitably be bent upon succeeding. The great thing is not to make any sacrifice in order to attain that success, and this is what your serious, upright and honest teaching inculcated to perfection.

In this way St. Sulpice with its contempt for literature is perforce a capital school for style, the fundamental rule of which is to have solely in view

the thought which it is wished to inculcate, and therefore to have a thought in the mind. This was far more valuable than the rhetoric of M. Dupanloup, and the teaching of the new Catholic school. At St. Sulpice, the main substance of a matter excluded all other considerations. Theology was of prime importance there, and if the way in which the studies were shaped was somewhat deficient in vigour, this was because the general tendency of Catholicism, especially in France, is not in the direction of very high and sustained efforts. St. Sulpice has, however, in our time turned out a theologian like M. Carrière, whose vast labours are in many respects remarkable for their depth ; men of erudition like M. Gosselin and M. Faillon, whose conscientious researches are of great value, and philologists like M. Garnier, and especially M. Le Hir, the only eminent masters in the field of ecclesiastical critique whom the Catholic school in France has turned out.

But it is not to results such as these that the teachers of St. Sulpice attach the highest value. St. Sulpice is, above all, a school of virtue. It is chiefly in respect to virtue that St. Sulpice is a remnant of the past, a fossil two hundred years old. Many of my opinions surprise the outside world, because they have not seen what I have. At Sulpice I have seen, allied as I admit, with very narrow views, the perfection of goodness, politeness, modesty, and sacrifice of self.

There is enough virtue in St. Sulpice to govern the whole world, and this fact has made me very discriminating in my appreciation of what I have seen elsewhere. I have never met but one man in the present age who can bear comparison with the Sulpicians, that is M. Damiron, and those who knew him, know what the Sulpicians were. A future generation will never be able to realise what treasures to be expended in improving the welfare of mankind, are stored up in these ancient schools of silence, gravity and respect.

Such was the establishment in which I spent four years at the most critical period of my life. I was quite in my element there. While the majority of my fellow-students, weakened by the somewhat insipid classical teaching of M. Dupanloup, could not fairly settle down to the divinity of the schools, I at once took a liking for its bitter flavour ; I became as fond of it as a monkey is of nuts. The grave and kindly priests, with their strong convictions and good desires reminded me of my early teachers in Lower Brittany. Saint-Nicholas du Chardonnet and its superficial rhetoric I came to look upon as a mere digression of very doubtful utility. I came to realities from words, and I set seriously to study and analyse in its smallest details the Christian Faith which I more than ever regarded as the centre of all truth.

THE ISSY SEMINARY

PART II.

As I have already explained, the two years of philosophy which serve as an introduction to the study of theology are spent, not in Paris, but at the country house of Issy, situated in the village of that name outside Paris, just beyond the last houses of Vaugirard. The seminary is a very long building at one end of a large park, and the only remarkable feature about it is the central pavilion, which is so delicate and elegant in style that it will at once take the eye of a connoisseur. This pavilion was the suburban residence of Marguerite de Valois, the first wife of Henri IV., between the year 1606 and her death in 1615. This clever but not very strait-laced princess (upon whom, however, we need not be harder than was he who had the best right to be so) gathered around her the clever men of the day, and the *Petit Olympe d'Issy*, by Michel Bouteroue,[1] gives

[1] Paris, 1609-1612.

a good description of this bright and witty court. The verses are as follows :

Je veux d'un excellent ouvrage,
Dedans un portrait racourcy,
Représenter le païsage
Du petit Olympe d'Issy,
Pourveu que la grande princesse,
La perle et fleur de l'univers,
A qui cest ouvrage s'addresse,
Veuille favoriser mes vers.

Que l'ancienne poésie
Ne vante plus en ses écrits
Les lauriers du Daphné d'Asie
Et les beaux jardins de Cypris,
Les promenoirs et le bocage
Du Tempé frais et ombragé,
Qui parut lors qu'un marescage
En la mer se fut deschargé.

Qu'on ne vante plus la Touraine
Pour son air doux et gracieux,
Ny Chenonceaus, qui d'une reyne
Fut le jardin délicieux,
Ny le Tivoly magnifique
Où, d'un artifice nouveau,
Se faict une douce musique
Des accords du vent et de l'eau.

Issy, de beauté les surpasse
En beaux jardins et prés herbus,
Dignes d'estre au lieu de Parnasse
Le séjour des sœurs de Phébus.
Mainte belle source ondoyante,
Découlant de cent lieux divers,
Maintient sa terre verdoyante
Et ses arbrisseaux toujours verds.
. . . . . .

Un vivier est à l'advenüe
Près la porte de ce verger,
Qui, par une sente cognüe,
En l'estang se va descharger ;
Comme on voit les grandes rivières
Se perdre au giron de la mer,
Ainsi ces sources fontenières
En l'estang se vont renfermer.
. . . . . .

Une autre mare plus petite,
Si l'on retourne vers le mont,
Par l'ombre de son boys invite
De passer sur un petit pont,
Pour aller au lieu de délices,
Au plus doux séjour du plaisir,
Des mignardises, des blandices,
Du doux repos et du loysir.

After the death of Queen Marguerite, the house was sold and it belonged in turn to several Parisian families which occupied it until 1655. Olier turned it to more pious uses than it had known before, by inhabiting it during the last few years of his life. M. de Bretonvilliers, his successor, gave it to the Company of St. Sulpice as a branch for the Paris house. The little pavilion of Queen Marguerite was not in any way changed, except that the paintings on the walls were slightly modified. The Venuses were changed into Virgins, and the Cupids into angels, while the emblematic paintings with Spanish mottoes in the interstices were left untouched, as they did not shock the proprieties. A very fine room, the walls of which were covered with paintings of a secular character, was

whitewashed about half a century ago, but they would perhaps be found uninjured if this was washed off. The park to which Bouteroue refers in his poem is unchanged ; except that several statues of holy persons have been placed in it. An arbour with an inscription and two busts marks the spot where Bossuet and Fénelon, M. Tronson and M. de Noailles had long conferences upon the subject of Quietism, and agreed upon the thirty-four articles of the spiritual life, styled the Issy Articles.

Further on, at the end of an avenue of high trees, near the little cemetery of the Company, is a reproduction of the inside of the Santa Casa of Loretta, which is a favourite spot with the residents in the seminary, and which is decorated with the emblematic paintings of which they are so fond. I can still see the mystical rose, the tower of ivory, and the gate of gold, before which I have passed many a long morning in a state betwixt sleep and waking. *Hortus conclusus, fons signatus*, very plainly represented by means of what may be described as mural miniatures, excited my curiosity very much, but my imagination was too chaste to carry my thoughts beyond the limits of pious wonder. I am afraid that this beautiful park has been sadly injured by the war and the Communist insurrection of 1870—71. It was for me, after the cathedral of Tréguier, the first cradle of thought. I used to pass whole hours under the shade of its trees,

seated on a stone bench with a book in my hand. It was there that I acquired not only a good deal of rheumatism, but a great liking for our damp autumnal nature in the north of France. If, later in life, I have been charmed by Mount Hermon, and the sunheated slopes of the Anti-Lebanon, it is due to the polarisation which is the law of love and which leads us to seek out our opposites. My first ideal is a cool Jansenist bower of the seventeenth century, in October, with the keen impression of the air and the searching odour of the dying leaves. I can never see an old-fashioned French house in the Seine-et-Oise or the Seine-et-Marne, with its trim fenced gardens, without calling up to my mind the austere books which were in bygone days read beneath the shade of their walks. Deep should be our pity for those who have never been moved to these melancholy thoughts, and who have not realised how many sighs have been heaved ere joy came into our heart.

The mutual footing upon which masters and students at St. Sulpice stand is a very tolerant one. There is not beyond doubt a single establishment in the world where the student has more liberty. At St. Sulpice in Paris, a student might pass his three years without having any close communication with a single one of the superiors. It is assumed that the *régime* of the establishment will be self-acting. The superiors lead just the same life as the students, and intervene

as little as possible. A student who is anxious to work has the greatest of facilities for doing so. On the other hand those who are inclined to be idle have no compulsion to work put upon them; and there are very many in this case. The examinations are very insignificant in scope; there is not the least attempt at competition, and if there was it would be discouraged, though when we remember that the age of the students averages between eighteen and twenty, this is carrying the doctrine of non-intervention too far. It is beyond doubt very prejudicial to learning. But after all said and done, this unqualified respect for liberty and the treating as grown-up men of the lads who are already in spirit set apart for the priesthood, are the only proper rules to follow in the delicate task of training youths for what is in the eye of the Christian the most exalted of callings. I am myself of opinion that the same rule might be applied with advantage to the department of Public Instruction, and that the Normal School more especially might in some particulars take example by it.

The superior at Issy, during my stay there, was M. Gosselin, one of the most amiable and polite men I have ever known. He was a member of one of those old bourgeois families which, without being affiliated to the Jansenists, were not less deeply attached than the latter to religion. His mother, to whom he bore a great likeness, was still alive, and he was most devoted in

his respectful regard for her. He was very fond of recalling the first lessons in politeness which she gave him somewhere about 1796. He had accustomed himself in his childhood to adopt a usage which it was at that time dangerous to repudiate, and to use the word citizen instead of monsieur. As soon as mass began to be celebrated after the Revolution, his mother took him with her to church. They were nearly the only persons in the church, and his mother bade him go and offer to act as acolyte to the priest. The boy went up timidly to the priest, and with a blush said, "Citizen, will you allow me to serve mass for you?" "What are you saying!" exclaimed his mother; "you should never use the word citizen to a priest." His affability and kindness were beyond all praise. He was very delicate, and only attained an advanced age by exercising the strictest care over himself. His engaging features, wan and delicate, his slender body, which did not half fill the folds of his cassock, his exquisite cleanliness, the result of habits contracted in childhood, his hollow temples, the outlines of which were so clearly marked behind the loose silk skull-cap which he always wore, made up a very taking picture.

M. Gosselin was more remarkable for his erudition than his theology. He was a safe critic within the limits of an orthodoxy which he never thought of questioning, and he was placid to a degree. His

Histoire Littéraire de Fénelon is a much esteemed work, and his treatise on the power of the Pope over the sovereign in the Middle Ages[1] is full of research. It was written at a time when the works of Voigt and Hurter revealed to the Catholics the greatness of the Roman pontiffs in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This greatness was rather an awkward obstacle for the Gallicans, as there could be no doubt that the conduct of Gregory VII. and Innocent III. was not at all in conformity with the maxims of 1682. M. Gosselin thought that by means of a principle of public law, accepted in the Middle Ages, he had solved all the difficulties which these imposing narratives place in the way of theologians. M. Carrière was rather inclined to laugh at his sanguine ideas, and compared his efforts to those of an old woman who tries to thread her needle by holding it tight between the lamp and her spectacles. At last the cotton passes so close to the eye of the needle that she says "I have done it now!"—Not so, though she was scarcely a hairsbreadth off; but still she must begin again.

At my own inclination, and the advice of Abbé Tresvaux, a pious and learned Breton priest who was vicar-general to M. de Quélen, I chose M. Gosselin for my tutor, and I have retained a most affectionate recollection of him. No one could have shown more

[1] First Edition, 1839; second and much enlarged edition, 1845.

benevolence, cordiality and respect for a young man's conscience. He left me in possession of unrestricted liberty. Recognising the honesty of my character, the purity of my morals and the uprightness of my mind, it never occurred to him for a moment that I could be led to feel doubt upon subjects about which he himself had none. The great number of young ecclesiastics who had passed through his hands had somewhat weakened his powers of diagnosis. He classed his students wholesale, and I will, as I proceed, explain how one who was not my tutor read far more clearly into my conscience than he did, or than I did myself. Two of the other tutors, M. Gottofrey, one of the professors of philosophy, and M. Pinault, professor of mathematics and natural philosophy, were in every respect a contrast to M. Gosselin. The first named, a young priest of about seven and twenty, was, I believe, only half a Frenchman by descent. He had the bright rosy complexion of a young Englishwoman, with large eyes which had a melancholy-candid look. He was the most extraordinary instance which can be conceived of suicide through mystical orthodoxy. He would certainly have made, if he had cared to do so, an accomplished man of the world, and I have never known any one who would have been a greater favourite with women. He had within him an infinite capacity for loving. He felt that he had been highly gifted in this way ; and

then he set to work, in a sort of blind fury, to annihilate himself. It seemed as if he discerned Satan in those graces which God had so liberally bestowed upon him. He boiled with inward anger at the sight of his own comeliness ; he was like a shell within which a puny evil genius was ever busy in crushing the inner pearl. In the heroic ages of Christianity, he would have sought out the keen agony of martyrdom, but failing that he paid such constant court to death that she, whom alone he loved, embraced him at last. He went out to Canada, and the cholera which raged at Montreal gave him an excellent opportunity for attaining his end. He nursed the sick with eager joy and died.

I have always thought that there must have been a hidden romance in the life of M. Gottofrey, and that he had undergone some disappointment in love. He had perhaps expected too much from it, and finding that it was not boundless, had broken it as he would an idol. At all events he was not one of those who, knowing how to love have not known how to die. At times I fancy that I can see him in heaven amid the hosts of rosy-hued angels which Correggio loved to paint : at others, I imagine that the woman whom he might have taught to love him to distraction is scourging him through all eternity. Where he was unjust was in making his reason, which was in nowise to blame, suffer for the perturbation of his uneasy

nature (or spirit). He practised the studied absurdity of Tertullian and emulated the exaltation of St. Paul. His lectures on philosophy were an absolute travesty, as his contempt for philosophy was made apparent in every sentence ; and M. Gosselin, who set great value upon the divinity of the schools, quietly endeavoured to counteract his teaching. But fanaticism does not always prevent people from being clear-sighted. M. Gottofrey noticed something peculiar about me, and he detected that which had escaped the paternal optimism of M. Gosselin. He stirred my conscience to its very depths, as I shall presently explain, and with an unrelenting hand tore asunder all the bandages with which I had disguised even from myself the wounds of a faith already severely stricken.

M. Pinault was very much like M. Littré in respect to his concentrated passion and the originality of his ways. If M. Littré had received a Catholic education, he would have gone to the extreme of mysticism ; if M. Pinault had not received a Catholic education he would have been a revolutionist and positivist. Men of their stamp always go to one extreme or another. The very physiognomy of M. Pinault arrested attention. Eaten up by rheumatism, he seemed to embody in his person all the ways in which a body may be contorted from its proper shape. Ugly as he was, there was a

marked expression of vigour about his face ; but in direct contrast to M. Gosselin, he was deplorably lacking in cleanliness. While he was lecturing he would use his old cloak and the sleeves of his cassock as if it were a duster to wipe up anything ; and his skull-cap, lined with cotton wool to protect him from neuralgia, formed a very ugly border round his head. With all that he was full of passion and eloquence, somewhat sarcastic at times, but witty and incisive. He had little literary culture, but he often came out with some unexpected sally. You could feel that his was a powerful individuality which faith kept under due control, but which ecclesiastical discipline had not crushed. He was a saint, but had very little of the priest and nothing of the Sulpician about him. He did violence to the prime rule of the Company, which is to renounce anything approaching talent and originality, and to be pliant to the discipline which enjoys a general mediocrity.

M. Pinault had at first been professor of mathematics in the university. In associating himself with studies which, in our view, are incompatible with faith in the supernatural and fervent catholicism, he did no more than M. Cauchy, who was at once a mathematician of the first order and a more fervent believer than many members of the Academy of Sciences who are noted for their piety. Christianity is alleged to be a supernatural historical fact. The historical sciences

can be made to show—and to my mind, beyond the possibility of contradiction—that it is not a supernatural fact, and that there never has been such a thing as a supernatural fact. We do not reject miracles upon the ground of *a priori* reasoning, but upon the ground of critical and historical reasoning, we have no difficulty in proving that miracles do not happen in the nineteenth century, and that the stories of miraculous events said to have taken place in our day are based upon imposture and credulity. But the evidence in favour of the so-called miracles of the last three centuries, or even of those in the Middle Ages, is weaker still ; and the same may be said of those dating from a still earlier period, for the further back one goes, the more difficult does it become to prove a supernatural fact. In order thoroughly to understand this, you must have been accustomed to textual criticism and the historical method, and this is just what mathematics do not give. Even in our own day, we have seen an eminent mathematician fall into blunders which the slightest knowledge of historical science would have enabled him to avoid. M. Pinault's religious belief was so keen that he was anxious to become a priest. He was allowed to do very little in the way of theology, and he was at first attached to the science courses which in the programme of ecclesiastical studies are the necessary accompaniment of the two years of philosophy. He

would have been out of place at St. Sulpice with his lack of theological knowledge and the ardent mysticism of his imagination. But at Issy, where he associated with very young men who had not studied the texts, he soon acquired considerable influence. He was the leader of those who were full of ardent piety—the "mystics," as they are now called. All of them treated him as their director, and they formed, as it were, a school apart, from which the profane were excluded, and which had its own important secrets. A very powerful auxiliary of this party was the lay doorkeeper of the college, Père Hanique, as we called him. I always excite the wonder of the realists when I tell them that I have seen with my own eyes, a type which, owing to their scanty knowledge of human society, has never come beneath their notice, viz., the sublime conception of a hall-porter who has reached the most transcendent limits of speculation. Hanique in his humble lodge was almost as great a man as M. Pinault. Those who aimed at saintliness of life consulted him and looked up to him. His simplicity of mind was contrasted with the savant's coldness of soul, and he was adduced as an instance that the gifts of God are absolutely free. All this created a deep division of feeling in the college. The mystics worked themselves up to such a pitch of mental tension that several of them died, but this only increased the frenzy of the others. M. Gosselin had

too much tact to offer them a direct opposition, but for all that, there were two distinct parties in the college, the mystics acting under the immediate guidance of M. Pinault and Père Hanique, while the "good fellows" (as we modestly entitled ourselves) were guided by the simple, upright, and good Christian counsels of M. Gosselin. This division of opinion was scarcely noticeable among the masters. Nevertheless, M. Gosselin, disliking anything in the way of singularities or novelties, often looked askance at certain eccentricities. During recreation time he made a point of conversing in a gay and almost worldly tone, in contrast to the fine frenzy which M. Pinault always imported into his observations. He did not like Père Hanique and would not listen to any praise of him, perhaps because he felt the impropriety of a hall-porter being taken out of his place and set up as an authority on theology. He condemned and prohibited the reading of several books which were favourites with the mystical set, such as those of Marie d'Agreda. There was something very singular about M. Pinault's lectures, as he did not make any effort to conceal his contempt for the sciences which he taught and for the human intelligence at large. At times he would nearly go to sleep over his class, and altogether gave his pupils anything but a stimulus to work; and yet with all that he still had in him remnants of the scientific spirit which he had failed

to destroy. At times he had extraordinary flashes of genius, and some of his lectures on natural history have been one of the bases of my philosophical strain of thought. I am much indebted to him, but the instinct for learning which is in me, and which will, I trust, remain alive until the day of my death, would not admit of my remaining long in his set. He liked me well enough, but made no effort to attract me to him. His fiery spirit of apostleship could not brook my easy-going ways, and my disinclination for research. Upon one occasion he found me sitting in one of the walks, reading Clarke's treatise upon the *Existence of God*. As usual, I was wrapped up in a heavy coat. "Oh! the nice little fellow," he said, "how beautifully he is wrapped up. Do not interfere with him. He will always be the same. He will ever be studying, and when he should be attending to the charge of souls he will be at it still. Well wrapped up in his cloak, he will answer those who come to call him away: 'Leave me alone, can't you?'" He saw that his remark had gone home. I was confused but not converted, and as I made no reply, he pressed my hand and added, with a slight touch of irony, "He will be a little Gosselin."

M. Pinault, there can be no question, was far above M. Gosselin in respect to his natural force and the hardihood with which he took up certain views. Like another Diogenes, he saw how hollow and conven-

tional were a host of things which my worthy director regarded as articles of faith. But he did not shake me for a moment. I have never ceased to put faith in the intelligence of man. M. Gosselin, by his confidence in scholasticism, confirmed me in my rationalism, though not to so great an extent as M. Manier, one of the professors of philosophy. He was a man of unswerving honesty, whose opinions were in harmony with those of the moderate universitarian school, at that time so decried by the clergy. He had a great liking for the Scottish philosophers, and gave me Thomas Reid to study. He steadied my thoughts very much, and by the aid of his authority and that of M. Gosselin, I was enabled to put away the exaggerations of M. Pinault; my conscience was at rest, and I even got to think that the contempt for scholasticism and reason, so stoutly professed by the mystics, was not devoid of heresy, and of the worst of all heresies in the eyes of the Company of St. Sulpice, viz., the *Fideism* of M. de Lamennais.

Thus I gave myself over without scruple to my love for study, living in complete solitude during two whole years. I did not once come to Paris, readily as leaves were granted. I never joined in any games, passing the recreation hours on a seat in the grounds, and trying to keep myself warm by wearing two or three overcoats. The heads of the college, better advised than I was, told me how bad it was for a lad of my

age to take no exercise. I had scarcely done growing before I began to stoop. But my passion for study was too strong for me, and I gave way to it all the more readily because I believed it to be a wholesome one. I was blind to all else, but how could I suppose that the ardour for thought which I heard praised in Malebranche and so many other saintly and illustrious men was blameworthy in me, and was fated to bring about a result which I should have repudiated with indignation if it had been foreshadowed to me.

The character of the philosophy taught in the seminary was the Latin divinity of the schools—not in the outlandish and childish form which it assumed in the thirteenth century, but in the mitigated Cartesian form which was generally adopted for ecclesiastical education in the eighteenth century, and set out in the three volumes known by the name of *Philosophie de Lyon*. This name was given to it because the book formed part of a complete course of ecclesiastical study, drawn up a hundred years ago by order of M. de Montazet, the Jansenist Archbishop of Lyons. The theological part of the work, tainted with heresy, is now forgotten ; but the philosophical part, imbued with a very commendable spirit of rationalism, remained, as recently as 1840, the basis of philosophical teaching in the seminaries, much to the disgust of the neo-Catholic school, which regarded the book as dangerous and absurd. It

cannot be denied, however, that the problems were cleverly put, and the whole of these syllogistical dialectics formed an excellent course of training. I owe my lucidity of mind, more especially what skill I possess in dividing my subject (which is an art of capital importance, one of the conditions of the art of writing), to my divinity training, and in particular to geometry, which is the truest application of the syllogistical method. M. Manier mixed up with these ancient propositions the psychological analysis of the Scotch school. He had imbibed through his intimacy with Thomas Reid a great aversion to metaphysics, and an unlimited faith in common sense. *Posuit in visceribus hominis sapientiam* was his favourite motto, and it did not occur to him that if man, in his quest after the true and the good, has only to explore the recesses of his own heart, the *Catéchisme* of M. Olier was a building without a foundation. German philosophy was just beginning to be known, and what little I had been able to pick up had a strangely fascinating effect upon me. M. Manier impressed upon me that this philosophy shifted its ground too much, and that it was necessary to wait until it had completed its development before passing judgment upon it. "Scottish philosophy," he said, "has a reassuring influence and makes for Christianity;" and he depicted to me the worthy Thomas Reid in his double character of philosopher and minister of

the Gospel. Thus Reid was for some time my ideal, and my aspiration was to lead the peaceful life of a laborious priest, attached to his sacred office and dispensed from the ordinary duties of his calling in order to follow out his studies. The antagonism between philosophical pursuits of this kind and the Christian faith had not as yet come in upon me with the irresistible force and clearness which was soon to leave me no alternative between the renunciation of Christianity and inconsistency of the most unwarrantable kind.

The modern philosophical works, especially those of MM. Cousin and Jouffroy, were rarely seen in the seminary, though they were the constant subject of conversation on account of the discussion which they had excited among the clergy. This was the year of M. Jouffroy's death, and the pathetic despairing pages of his philosophy captivated us. I myself knew them by heart. We followed with deep interest the discussion raised by the publication of his posthumous works. In reality, we only knew Cousin, Jouffroy, and Pierre Leroux by those who had opposed them. The old-fashioned divinity of the schools is so upright that no demonstration of a proposition is complete unless followed by the formula, *Solvuntur objecta.* Herein are ingenuously set forth the objections against the proposition which it is sought to establish; and these objections are then solved, often in a way which

does not in the least diminish the force of the heterodox ideas which are supposed to have been controverted. In this way the whole body of modern ideas reached us beneath the cover of feeble refutations. We gained, moreover, a great deal of information from each other. One of our number, who had studied philosophy in the university, would recite passages from M. Cousin to us; a second, who had studied history, would familiarise us with Augustin Thierry; while a third came to us from the school of Montalembert and Lacordaire. His lively imagination made him a great favourite with us, but the *Philosophie de Lyon* was more than he could endure, and he left us.

M. Cousin fascinated us, but Pierre Leroux, with his tone of profound conviction and his thorough appreciation of the great problems awaiting solution, exercised a still more potent influence, and we did not see the shortcomings of his studies and the sophistry of his mind. My customary course of reading was Pascal, Malebranche, Euler, Locke, Leibnitz, Descartes, Reid, and Dugald Stewart. In the way of religious books, my preferences were for Bossuet's Sermons and the *Élévations sur les Mystères*. I was very familiar, too, with François de Sales, both by continually hearing extracts from his works read in the seminary, and especially through the charming work which Pierre le Camus has written about him. With regard

to the more mystical works, such as St. Theresa, Marie d'Agreda, Ignatius de Loyola, and M. Olier, I never read them. M. Gosselin, as I have said, dissuaded me from doing so. The *Lives of the Saints*, written in an overwrought strain, were also very distasteful to him, and Fénelon was his rule and his limit. Many of the early saints excited his strongest prejudices because of their disregard of cleanliness, their scant education, and their lack of common sense.

My keen predilection for philosophy did not blind me as to the inevitable nature of its results. I soon lost all confidence in the abstract metaphysics which are put forward as being a science apart from all others, and as being capable of solving alone the highest problems of humanity. Positive science then appeared to me to be the only source of truth. In after years I felt quite irritated at the idea of Auguste Comte being dignified with the title of a great man for having expressed in bad French what all scientific minds had seen for the last two hundred years as clearly as he had done. The scientific spirit was the fundamental principle in my disposition. M. Pinault would have been the master for me if he had not in some strange way striven to disguise and distort the best traits in his talent. I understood him better than he would have wished, and, in spite of himself. I had received a rather advanced education in mathematics from

my first teachers in Brittany. Mathematics and physical induction have always been my strong point, the only stones in the edifice which have never shifted their ground and which are always serviceable. M. Pinault taught me enough of general natural history and physiology to give me an insight into the laws of existence. I realised the insufficiency of what is called spiritualism; the Cartesian proofs of the existence of a soul distinct from the body always struck me as being very inadequate, and thus I became an idealist and not a spiritualist in the ordidary acceptation of the term. An endless *fieri*, a ceaseless metamorphosis seemed to me to be the law of the world. Nature presented herself to me as a whole in which creation of itself has no place, and in which therefore, everything undergoes transformation.[1] It will be asked how it was that this fairly clear conception of a positive philosophy did not eradicate my belief in scholasticism and Christianity. It was because I was young and inconsistent, and because I had not acquired the critical faculty. I was held back by the example of so many mighty minds which had read so deeply in the book of nature, and yet had remained Christians. I was more specially influenced

[1] An essay which describes my philosophical ideas at this epoch, entitled the "Origine du Langage," first published in the *Liberté de penser* (September and December, 1848), faithfully pourtrays, as I then conceived it, the spectacle of living nature as the result and evidence of a very ancient historical development.

by Malebranche, who continued to recite his prayers throughout the whole of his life, while holding, with regard to the general dispensation of the universe, ideas differing but very little from those which I had arrived at. The *Entretiens sur la Métaphysique* and the *Méditations chrétiennes* were ever in my thoughts.

The fondness for erudition is innate in me, and M. Gosselin did much to develop it. He had the kindness to choose me as his reader. At seven o'clock every morning I went to read to him in his bedroom, and he was in the habit of pacing up and down, sometimes stopping, sometimes quickening his pace and interrupting me with some sensible or caustic remark. In this way I read to him the long stories of Father Maimbourg, a writer who is now forgotten, but who in his time was appreciated by Voltaire, various publications by M. Benjamin Guérard, whose learning was much appreciated by him, and a few works by M. de Maistre, notably his *Lettre sur l'Inquisition espagnole.* He did not much like this last-named treatise, and he would constantly rub his hands and say, "How plain it is that M. de Maistre is no theologian." All he cared for was theology, and he had a profound contempt for literature. He rarely failed to stigmatise as futile nonsense the highly-esteemed studies of the Nicolaites. For M. Dupanloup, whose principal dogma was that there is no salvation without a good literary education,

he had little sympathy, and he generally avoided mention of his name.

For myself, believing as I do that the best way to mould young men of talent is never to speak to them about talent or style, but to educate them and to stimulate their mental curiosity upon questions of philosophy, religion, politics, science, and history—or, in other words, to go to the substance of things instead of adopting a hollow rhetorical teaching, I was quite satisfied at this new direction given to my studies. I forgot the very existence of such a thing as modern literature. The rumour that contemporary writers existed occasionally reached us, but we were so accustomed to suppose that there had not been any of talent since the death of Louis XIV., that we had an *a priori* contempt for all contemporary productions. *Le Télémaque* was the only specimen of light literature which ever came into my hands, and that was in an edition which did not contain the Eucharis episode, so that it was not until later that I became acquainted with the few delightful pages which record it. My only glimpse of antiquity was through *Télémaque* and *Aristonoüs*, and I am very glad that such is the case. It was thus that I learnt the art of depicting nature by moral touches. Up to the year 1865 I had never formed any other idea of the island of Chios except that embodied in the phrase of Fénelon: "The island of Chios, happy as the country of Homer."

These words, so full of harmony and rhythm,[1] seemed to present a perfect picture of the place, and though Homer was not born there—nor, perhaps, anywhere—they gave me a better idea of the beautiful (and now so hapless) isle of Greece than I could have derived from a whole mass of material description.

I must not omit to mention another book, which, together with *Télémaque*, I for a long time regarded as the highest expression of literature. M. Gosselin one day called me aside, and after much beating about the bush, told me that he had thought of letting me read a book which some people might regard as dangerous, and which, as a matter of fact, might be in certain cases on account of the vivacity with which the author expresses passion. He had, however, decided that I might be trusted with this book, which was called the *Comte de Valmont*. Many people will no doubt wonder what could have been the book which my worthy director thought could only be read after a special preparation as regards judgment and maturity. *Le Comte de Valmont; ou, Les Egarements de la Raison*, is a novel by Abbé Gérard, in which, under the cover of a very innocent plot, the author refutes the doctrines of the eighteenth century, and inculcates the principles of an enlightened religion. Sainte-Beuve, who knew the *Comte de Valmont*, as he knew everything, was con-

[1] In the French the phrase is, "L'île de Chio, fortunée patrie d'Homère."

sumed with laughter when I told him this story. But for all that the *Comte de Valmont* was a rather dangerous book. The Christianity set forth in it is no more than Deism, the religion of *Télémaque*, a sort of sentiment in the abstract, without being any particular kind of religion.[1] Thus everything tended to lull me into a

[1] I went a short time ago to the National Library to refresh my memory about the *Comte de Valmont*. Having my attention called away, I asked M. Soury to look through the book for me, as I was anxious to have his impression of it. He replied to me in the following terms :

"I have been a long time in telling you what I think of the *Comte de Valmont*. The fact is that it was only by an heroic effort that I managed to finish it. Not but what this work is honestly conceived and fairly well written. But the effect of reading through these thousands of pages is so profoundly wearisome that one is scarcely in a position to do justice to the work of Abbé Gérard. One cannot help being vexed with him for being so unnecessarily tedious.

"As so often happens, the best part of this book are the notes, that is to say, a mass of extracts and selections taken from the famous writers of the last two centuries, notably from Rousseau. All the "proofs" and apologetic arguments ruin the work unfortunately, the eloquence and dialectics of Rousseau, Diderot, Helvetius, Holbach, and even Voltaire, differing very much from those of Abbé Gérard. It is the same with the libertines' reasons refuted by the father of the Comte de Valmont. It must be a very dangerous thing to bring forward mischievous doctrines with so much force. They have a savour which renders the best things insipid, and it is with these good doctrines that the six or seven volumes of the *Comte de Valmont* are filled. Abbé Gérard did not wish his work to be called a novel, and as a matter of fact there is neither drama nor action in the interminable letters of the Marquis, the Count and Emilie.

"Count de Valmont is one of those sceptics who are often met with in the world. A man of weak mind, pretentious and foppish, incapable of thinking and reflecting for himself, ignorant into the bargain, and without any kind of knowledge upon any subject, he meets his hapless father with all sorts of difficulties against morality, religion and

state of fancied security. I thought that by copying the politeness of M. Gosselin and the moderation of M. Manier I was a Christian.

I cannot honestly say, moreover, that my faith in Christianity was in reality diminished. My faith has been destroyed by historical criticism, not by scholasticism nor by philosophy. The history of philosophy and the sort of scepticism by which I had been caught rather maintained me within the limits of Christianity than drove me beyond them. I often repeated to myself the lines which I had read in Brucker :—

> "Percurri, fateor, sectas attentius omnes,
> Plurima quæsivi, per singula quaque cucurri,
> Nec quidquam inveni melius quam credere Christo."

A certain amount of modesty kept me back. The capital question as to the truth of the Christian dogmas and of the Bible never forced itself upon me. I admitted the revelation in a general sense, like

Christianity in particular, just as if he had a right to an opinion on matters the study of which requires so much enlightenment and takes up so much time. The best thing the poor fellow can do is to reform his ways, and he does not fail to neglect doing this at nearly every volume.

"The seventh volume of the edition which I have before me is entitled, *La Théorie du Bonheur ; ou, L'Art de se rendre Heureux mis a la Portée de tous les Hommes, faisant Suite au 'Comte de Valmont,'* Paris Bossange, 1801, eleventh edition. This is a different book, whatever the publisher may say, and I confess that this secret of happiness, brought within the reach of everybody, did not create a very favourable impression upon me."

Leibnitz and Malebranche. There can be no doubt that my *fieri* philosophy was the height of heterodoxy, but I did not stop to reason out the consequences. However, all said and done, my masters were satisfied with me. M. Pinault rarely interfered with me. More of a mystic than a fanatic, he concerned himself but little with those who did not come immediately in his way. The finishing stroke was given by M. Gottofrey with a degree of boldness and precision which I did not thoroughly appreciate until afterwards. In the twinkling of an eye, this truly gifted man tore away the veils which the prudent M. Gosselin and the honest M. Manier had adjusted around my conscience in order to tranquillise it, and to lull it to sleep.

M. Gottofrey rarely spoke to me, but he followed me with the utmost curiosity. My arguments in Latin, delivered with much firmness and emphasis, caused him surprise and uneasiness. Sometimes, I was too much in the right; at others I pointed out the weak points in the reasons given me as valid. Upon one occasion, when my objections had been urged with force, and when some of the listeners could not repress a smile at the weakness of the replies, he broke off the discussion. In the evening he called me on one side, and described to me with much warmth how unchristian it was to place all faith in reasoning, and how injurious an effect rationalism had upon faith. He displayed a remarkable amount of

animation, and reproached me with my fondness for study. What was to be gained, he said, by further research. Everything that was essential to be known had already been discovered. It was not by knowledge that men's souls were saved. And gradually working himself up, he exclaimed in passionate accents—"You are not a Christian!"

I never felt such terror as that which this phrase, pronounced in a very resonant tone, evoked within me. In leaving M. Gottofrey's presence the words "You are not a Christian" sounded all night in my ear like a clap of thunder. The next day I confided my troubles to M. Gosselin, who kindly reassured me, and who could not or would not see anything wrong. He made no effort, even, to conceal from me how surprised and annoyed he was at this ill-timed attempt upon a conscience for which he, more than any one else, was responsible. I am sure that he looked upon the hasty action of M. Gottofrey as a piece of impudence, the only result of which would be to disturb a dawning vocation. M. Gosselin, like many directors, was of opinion that religious doubts are of no gravity among young men when they are disregarded, and that they disappear when the future career has been finally entered upon. He enjoined me not to think of what had occurred, and I even found him more kindly than ever before. He did not in the least understand the nature of

my mind, or in any degree foresee its future logical evolutions. M. Gottofrey alone had a clear perception of things. He was right a dozen times over, as I can now very plainly see. It needed the transcendent lucidity of this martyr and ascetic to discover that which had quite escaped those who directed my conscience with so much uprightness and goodness.

I talked too with M. Manier, who strongly advised me not to let my faith in Christianity be affected by objections of detail. With regard to the question of entering holy orders, he was always very reserved. He never said anything which was calculated either to induce me or dissuade me. This was in his eyes more or less of a secondary consideration. The essential point, as he thought, was the possession of the true Christian spirit, inseparable from real philosophy. In his eyes there was no difference between a priest, or professor of Scotch philosophy, in the university. He often dwelt upon the honourable nature of such a career, and more than once he spoke to me of the École Normale. I did not speak of this overture to M. Gosselin, for assuredly the very idea of leaving the seminary for the École Normale, would have seemed to him perdition.

It was decided, therefore, that after my two years of philosophy I should pass into the seminary of St. Sulpice to get through my theological course.

The flash which shot through the mind of M. Gottofrey had no immediate consequence. But now at an interval of eight and thirty years, I can see how clear a perception of the reality he had. He alone possessed foresight, and I much regret now that I did not follow his impulse. I should have quitted the seminary without having studied Hebrew or theology. Physiology and the natural sciences would have absorbed me, and I do not hesitate to express my belief—so great was the ardour which these vital sciences excited in me—that if I had cultivated them continuously I should have arrived at several of the results achieved by Darwin, and partially foreseen by myself. Instead of that I went to St. Sulpice and learnt German and Hebrew, the consequence being that the whole course of my life was different. I was led to the study of the historical sciences—conjectural in their nature—which are no sooner made than they are unmade, and which will be put on one side in a hundred years time. For the day is not we may be sure, very far distant when man will cease to attach much interest to his past. I am very much afraid that our minute contributions to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, which are intended to assist to an accurate comprehension of history, will crumble to dust before they have been read. It is by chemistry at one end and by astronomy at the other, and especially by general

physiology, that we really grasp the secret of existence of the world or of God, whichever it may be called. The one thing which I regret is having selected for my study researches of a nature which will never force themselves upon the world, or be more than interesting dissertations upon a reality which has vanished for ever. But as regards the exercise—and pleasure of thought is concerned—I certainly chose the better part, for at St. Sulpice I was brought face to face with the Bible, and the sources of Christianity, and in the following chapter I will endeavour to describe how eagerly I immersed myself in this study, and how, through a series of critical deductions, which forced themselves upon my mind, the bases of my existence, as I had hitherto understood it, were completely overturned.

THE ST SULPICE SEMINARY

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PART I.

THE house built by M. Olier in 1645 was not the large quadrangular barrack-like building which now occupies one side of the square of St. Sulpice. The old seminary of the seventeenth and eighteenth century covered the whole area of what is now the square, and quite concealed Servandoni's façade. The site of the present seminary was formerly occupied by the gardens and by the college of bursars nicknamed the Robertins. The original building disappeared at the time of the Revolution. The chapel, the ceiling of which was regarded as Lebrun's masterpiece, has been destroyed, and all that remains of the old house is a picture by Lebrun representing the Pentecost in a style which would excite the wonder of the author of the Acts of the Apostles. The Virgin is the centre figure, and is receiving the whole of the pouring out of the

Holy Ghost, which from her spreads to the apostles. Saved at the Revolution, and afterwards in the gallery of Cardinal Fesch, this picture was bought back by the corporation of St. Sulpice, and is now in the seminary chapel.

With the exception of the walls and the furniture, all is old at St. Sulpice, and it is easy to believe that one is living in the seventeenth century. Time and its ravages have effaced many differences. St. Sulpice now embodies in itself many things which were once far removed from one another, and those who wish to get the best idea attainable in the present day, of what Port-Royal, the original Sorbonne, and the institutions of the ancient French clergy generally were like, must enter its portals. When I joined the St. Sulpice seminary in 1843, there were still a few directors who had seen M. Emery, but there were only two, if I remember right, whose memories carried them back to a date earlier than the Revolution. M. Hugon had acted as acolyte at the consecration of M. de Talleyrand in the chapel of Issy in 1788. It seems that the attitude of the Abbé de Périgord during the ceremony was very indecorous. M. Hugon related that he accused himself, when at confession the following Saturday, "of having formed hasty judgments as to the piety of a holy bishop." The superior-general, M. Garnier, was more than eighty, and he was in every respect

an ecclesiastic of the old school. He had gone through his studies at the Robertins College and afterwards at the Sorbonne, from which he gave one the idea of just emerging, and when one heard him talk of "Monsieur Bossuet" and "Monsieur Fénelon,[1] it seemed as if one was face to face with an actual pupil of those great men. There is nothing in common except the name and the dress between these ecclesiastics that of the old *régime* and those of the present day. Compared to the young and exuberant members of the Issy school, M. Garnier had the appearance almost of a layman, with a complete absence of all external demonstrations and his staid and reasonable piety. In the evening, some of the younger students went to keep him company in his room for an hour. The conversation never took a mystical turn. M. Garnier narrated his recollections, spoke of M. Emery, and foreshadowed with melancholy, his approaching end. The contrast between his quietude and the ardour of Penault and M. Gottofrey was very striking.

[1] I should like to make one observation in this connection. People of the present day have got into the habit of putting *Monseigneur* before a proper name, and of saying *Monseigneur Dupanloup* or Monseigneur Affre. This is bad French; the word "Monseigneur" should only be used in the vocative case or before an official title. In speaking to M. Dupanloup or M. Affre, it would be correct to say *Monseigneur*. In speaking of them, *Monsieur Dupanloup, Monsieur Affre; Monsieur or Monseigneur l'Évêque d'Orleans,* Monsieur or Monseigneur l'Archévêque de Paris.

These aged priests were so honest, sensible and upright, observing their rules, and defending their dogmas, just as a faithful soldier holds the post which has been committed to his keeping. The higher questions were altogether beyond them. The love of order and devotion to duty were the guiding principles of their lives. M. Garnier was a learned Orientalist, and better versed than any living Frenchman in the Biblical exegesis as taught by the Catholics a century ago. The modesty which characterised St. Sulpice deterred him from publishing any of his works, and the outcome of his studies was an immense manuscript representing a complete course of Holy Writ, in accordance with the relatively moderate views which prevailed among the Catholics and Protestants at the close of the eighteenth century. It was very analogous in spirit to that of Rosenmüller, Hug and Jahn. When I joined St. Sulpice, M. Garnier was too old to teach, and our professors used to read us extracts from his copy-books. They were full of erudition, and testified to a very thorough knowledge of language. Now and then we came upon some artless observation which made us smile, such, for instance, as the way in which he got over the difficulties relating to Sarah's adventure in Egypt. Sarah, as we know, was close upon seventy when Pharaoh conceived so great a passion for her, and M. Garnier got over this by observing that this

was not the only instance of the kind, and that "Mademoiselle de Lenclos" was the cause of duels being fought, when over seventy. M. Garnier had not made himself acquainted with the latest labours of the new German school, and he remained in happy ignorance of the inroads which the criticism of the nineteenth century had made upon the ancient system. His best title to fame is that he moulded in M. Le Hir, a pupil who, inheriting his own vast knowledge, added to it familiarity with modern discoveries, and who, with a sincerity which proved the depth of his faith, did not in the least conceal the depth to which the knife had gone.

Overborne by the weight of years, and absorbed by the cares which the general direction of the Company entailed, M. Garnier left the entire superintendence of the Paris house to M. Carbon, the director. M. Carbon was the embodiment of kindness, joviality and straightforwardness. He was no theologian, and was so far from being a man of superior mind, that at first one would be tempted to look upon him as a very simple, not to say common, person. But as one came to know him better, one was surprised to discover beneath this humble exterior, one of the rarest things in the world, viz., unalloyed cordiality, motherly condescension, and a charming openness of manner. I have never met with any one so entirely free from personal vanity.

He was the first to laugh at himself, at his half intentional blunders, and at the laughable situations into which his artlessness would often land him. Like all the older directors, he had to say the orison in his turn. He never gave it five minutes previous consideration, and he sometimes got into such a comical state of confusion with his improvised address, that we had to bite our tongues to keep from laughing. He saw how amused we were, and it struck him as being perfectly natural. It was he who, during the course of Holy Writ, had to read M. Garnier's manuscript. He used to flounder about purposely, in order to make us laugh, in the parts which had fallen out of date. The most singular thing was that he was not very mystic. I asked one of my fellow students what he thought was M. Carbon's motive-idea in life, and his reply was, "the abstract of duty." M. Carbon took a fancy to me from the first, and he saw that the fundamental feature in my disposition was cheerfulness, and a ready acquiescence in my lot. "I see that we shall get on very well together," he said to me with a pleasant smile; and as a matter of fact M. Carbon is one of those for whom I have felt the deepest affection. Seeing that I was studious, full of application, and conscientious in my work, he said to me after a very short time—"You should be thinking of your society, that is your proper place." He

treated me almost as a colleague, so complete was his confidence in me.

The other directors, who had to teach the various branches of theology, were without exception the worthy continuators of a respectable tradition. But as regards doctrine itself, the breach was made. Ultramontanism and the love of the irrational had forced their way into the citadel of moderate theology. The old school knew how to rave soberly, and followed the rules of common sense even in the absurd. This school only admitted the irrational and the miraculous up to the limit strictly required by Holy Writ and the authority of the Church. The new school revels in the miraculous, and seems to take its pleasure in narrowing the ground upon which apologetics can be defended. Upon the other hand, it would be unfair not to say that the new school is in some respects more open and consistent, and that it has derived, especially through its relations with Germany, elements for discussion which have no place in the ancient treatises *De Locis Theologicis*. St. Sulpice has had but one representative in this path so thickly sown with unexpected incidents and—it may perhaps be added—with dangers ; but he is unquestionably the most remarkable member of the French clergy in the present day. I am speaking of M. Le Hir, whom I knew very intimately, as will presently be seen. In order to understand what follows, the reader must

be very deeply versed in the workings of the human mind, and above all in matters of faith.

M. Le Hir was in an equally eminent degree a savant and a saint. This co-habitation in the same person, of two entities which are rarely found together, took place in him without any kind of fraction, for the saintly side of his character had the absolute mastery. There was not one of the objections of rationalism which escaped his attention. He did not make the slightest concession to any of them, for he never felt the shadow of a doubt as to the truth of orthodoxy. This was due rather to an act of the supreme will than to a result imposed upon him. Holding entirely aloof from natural philosophy and the scientific spirit, the first condition of which is to have no prior faith and to reject that which does not come spontaneously, he remained in a state of equilibrium which would have been fatal to convictions less urgent than his. The supernatural did not excite any natural repugnance in him. His scales were very nicely adjusted, but in one of them was a weight of unknown quantity—an unshaken faith. Whatever might have been placed in the other, would have seemed light; all the objections in the world would not have moved it a hairsbreadth.

M. Le Hir's superiority was in a great measure due to his profound knowledge of the German exegeses. Whatever he found in them compatible with Catholic

orthodoxy, he appropriated. In matters of critique, incompatibilities were continually occurring, but in grammar, upon the other hand, there was no difficulty in finding common ground. There was no one like M. Le Hir in this respect. He had thoroughly mastered the doctrine of Gesenius and Ewald, and criticised many points in it with great learning. He interested himself in the Phœnician inscriptions, and propounded a very ingenious theory which has since been confirmed. His theology was borrowed almost entirely from the German Catholic School, which was at once more advanced, and less reasonable, than our ancient French scholasticism. M. Le Hir reminds one in many respects of Dollinger, especially in regard to his learning and his general scope of view ; but his docility would have preserved him from the dangers in which the Vatican Council involved most of the learned members of the clergy. He died prematurely in 1870 upon the eve of the Council, which he was just about to attend as a theologian. I was intending to ask my colleagues in the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres to make him an unattached member of our body. I have no doubt that he would have rendered considerable service to the Committee of Semitic Inscriptions.

M. Le Hir possessed, in addition to his immense learning, the talent of writing with much force and accuracy. He might have been very witty if he had

been so minded. His undeviating mysticism resembled that of M. Gottofrey; but he had much more rectitude of judgment. His aspect was very singular, for he was like a child in figure, and very weakly in appearance, but with that, eyes and a forehead indicating the highest intelligence. In short, the only faculty lacking, was one which would have caused him to abjure Catholicism, viz. the critical one. Or I should rather say that he had the critical faculty very highly developed in every point not touching religious belief; but that possessed in his view such a co-efficient of certainty, that nothing could counterbalance it. His piety was in truth, like the mother-o'pearl shells of François de Sales, "which live in the sea without tasting a drop of salt water." The knowledge of error which he possessed was entirely speculative: a water-tight compartment prevented the least infiltration of modern ideas into the secret sanctuary of his heart, within which burnt, by the side of the petroleum, the small unquenchable light of a tender and sovereign piety. As my mind was not provided with these water-tight compartments, the encounter of these conflicting elements, which in M. Le Hir produced profound inward peace, led in my case to strange explosions.

THE ST SULPICE SEMINARY

PART II.

ST. SULPICE, in short, when I went through it forty years ago, provided, despite its shortcomings, a fairly high education. My ardour for study had plenty to feed upon. Two unknown worlds unfolded themselves before me: theology, the rational exposition of the Christian dogma, and the Bible, supposed to be the depository and the source of this dogma. I plunged deeply into work. I was even more solitary than at Issy, for I did not know a soul in Paris. For two years I never went into any street except the Rue de Vaugirard, through which once a week we walked to Issy. I very rarely indulged in any conversation. The professors were always very kind to me. My gentle disposition and studious habits, my silence and modesty, gained me their favour, and I believe that several of them remarked to one another, as M. Carbon had to me, "He will make an excellent colleague for us."

Upon the 29th of March, 1844, I wrote to one of my friends in Brittany, who was then at the St. Brieuc seminary:

"I very much like being here. The tone of the place is excellent, being equally free from rusticity, coarse egotism and affectation. There is little intimacy or geniality, but the conversation is dignified and elevated, with scarcely a trace of commonplace or gossip. It would be idle to look for anything like cordiality between the directors and the students, for this is a plant which grows only in Brittany. But the directors have a certain fund of tolerance and kindness in their composition which harmonises very well with the moral condition of the young men upon their joining the seminary. Their control is exercised almost imperceptibly, for the seminary seems to conduct itself, instead of being conducted by them. The regulations, the usages, and the spirit of the place are the sole agents; the directors are mere passive overseers. St. Sulpice is a machine which has been well constructed for the last two hundred years; it goes of itself, and all that the driver has to do is to watch the movements, and from time to time to screw up a nut and oil the joints. It is not like Saint-Nicholas, for instance, where the machine was never allowed to go by itself. The driver was always tinkering at it, running first to the right and then to the left, peering in here and altering a wheel

there, not knowing or remembering that the best mounted machine is the one which requires the least attention from the man who sets it in motion. The great advantage which I enjoy here is the remarkable facility afforded me for work which has become a prime necessity to me, and which, considering my internal condition, is also a duty. The lectures on morals are excellent, but I cannot say as much of those on dogma, as the professor is a novice. This, coupled with the great importance of the *Traités de la Religion et de l'Église*, especially in my case, would be a very serious drawback, but for my having found substitutes for him among the other professors."

As a matter of fact, I had a special liking for the ecclesiastical sciences. A text once implanted in my memory was never forgotten; my head was in the state of a *Sic et Non* of Abélard. Theology is like a Gothic cathedral, having in common with its grandeur its vast empty spaces and its lack of solidity. Neither to the Fathers of the Church nor to the Christian writers during the first half of the Middle Ages did it occur to draw up a systematic exposition of the Christian dogmas which would dispense with reading the Bible all through. The *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas, a summary of the earlier scholasticism, is like a vast bookcase with compartments, which, if Catholicism is to endure, will be of service to all time, the decisions of councils and

of Popes in the future having, so to speak, their place marked out for them beforehand. There can be no question of progress in such an order of exposition. In the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent settled a number of points which had hitherto been the subject of controversy; but each of these anathemas had already its place allotted to it in the wide purview of St. Thomas, Melchior Canus, and Suarès remodelled the *Summa* without adding anything essential to it. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Sorbonne composed for use in the schools handy treatises which are for the most part revised and reduced copies of the *Summa*. At each page one can detect the same texts cut out and separated from the comments which explain them; the same syllogisms, triumphant, but devoid of any solid foundation; the same defects of historical criticism, arising from the confusion of dates and places.

Theology may be divided into dogmatics and ethics. Dogmatic theology, in addition to the Prolegomena comprising the discussions relating to the sources of divine authority, is divided into fifteen treatises upon all the dogmas of Christianity. At the basis is the treatise *De la vraie Religion*, which seeks to demonstrate the supernatural character of the Christian religion, that is to say of Revealed Writ and of the Church. Then all the dogmas are proved by Holy

Writ, by the Councils, by the Fathers, and by the theologians. It cannot be denied that there is a very frank rationalism at the root of all this. If scholasticism is the descendant in the first generation of St. Thomas Aquinas, it is descended in the second from Abélard. In such a system reason holds the first place, reason proves the revelation, the divinity of Scripture and the authority of the Church. This done, the door is open to every kind of deduction. The only instance in which St. Sulpice has been moved to anger since the extinction of Jansenism was when M. de Lamennais declared that the starting-point should be faith, and not reason. And what is to be the test in the last resort of the claims of faith if not reason!

Moral theology consists of a dozen treatises comprising the whole body of philosophical ethics and of law, completed by the revelation and decisions of the Church. All this forms a sort of encyclopædia very closely connected. It is an edifice, the stones of which are attached to one another by iron clamps, but the base is extremely weak. This base is the treatise *De la vraie Religion*, which treatise does not hold together. For not only does it fail to show that the Christian religion is more especially divine and revealed than the others, but it does not even prove that in the field of reality which comes within the reach of our observation there has occurred a single

supernatural fact or miracle. M. Littré's inexorable phrase, "Despite all the researches which have been made, no miracle has ever taken place where it could be observed and put upon record" is a stumbling-block which cannot be moved out of the path. It is impossible to prove that a miracle occurred in the past, and we shall doubtless have a long time to wait before one takes place under such conditions as could alone give a right-minded person the assurance that he was not mistaken.

Admitting the fundamental thesis of the treatise *De la vraie Religion*, the field of argument is narrowed, but the argument is a long way from being at an end. The question has to be discussed with the Protestants and dissenters, who, while admitting the revealed texts to be true, decline to see in them the dogmas which the Catholic Church has in the course of time taken upon herself. The controversy here branches off into endless points, and the advocates of Catholicism are continually being worsted. The Catholic Church has taken upon herself to prove that her dogmas have always existed just as she teaches them, that Jesus instituted confession, extreme unction and marriage, and that he taught what was afterwards decided upon by the Nicene and Trent Councils. Nothing can be more erroneous. The Christian dogma has been formed, like everything else, slowly and piecemeal, by a sort of inward vegetation.

Theology, by asserting the contrary, raises up a mass of objections, and places itself in the predicament of having to reject all criticism. I would advise any one who wishes to realise this to read in a theological work the treatise on Sacraments, and he will see by what a series of unsupported suppositions, worthy of the Apocrypha, of Marie d'Agreda or Catherine Emmerich, the conclusion is reached that all the sacraments were established by Jesus Christ during his life. The discussion as to the matter and form of the sacraments is open to the same objections. The obstinacy with which matter and form are detected everywhere dates from the introduction of the Aristotelian tenets into theology in the thirteenth century. Those who rejected this retrospective application of the philosophy of Aristotle to the liturgical creations of Jesus incurred ecclesiastical censure.

The intention of the "about to be" in history as in nature became henceforth the essence of my philosophy. My doubts did not arise from one train of reasoning but from ten thousand. Orthodoxy has an answer to everything and will never avow itself worsted. No doubt, it is admitted in criticism itself that a subtle answer may, in certain cases, be a valid one. The real truth does not always look like the truth. One subtle answer may be true, or even at a stretch, two. But for three to be true is more difficult, and as to four bearing examination that is almost

impossible. But if a thesis can only be upheld by admitting that ten, a hundred, or even a thousand subtle answers are true at one and the same time, a clear proof is afforded that this thesis is false. The calculation of probabilities applied to all these shortcomings of detail is overwhelming in its effect upon unprejudiced minds, and Descartes had taught me that the prime condition for discovering the truth is to be free from all prejudice.

THE ST SULPICE SEMINARY

PART III.

THE theological struggle defined itself more particularly in my case upon the ground of the so-called revealed texts. Catholic teaching, with full confidence as to the issue, accepted battle upon this ground as upon others with the most complete good faith. The Hebrew tongue was in this case the main instrument, for one of the two Christian Bibles is in Hebrew, while even as regards the New Testament there can be no proper exegesis without Hebrew.

The study of Hebrew was not compulsory in the seminary, and it was not followed by many of the students. In 1843-44, M. Garnier still lectured in his room upon the more difficult texts to two or three students. M. Le Hir had for several years taken the lectures on grammar. I joined the course at once, and the well-defined philology of M. Le Hir was full of charm for me. He was very kind to me, and being a Breton like myself, there was much similarity of

disposition between us. At the expiration of a few weeks I was almost his only pupil. His way of expounding the Hebrew grammar, with comparison of other Semitic idioms, was most excellent. I possessed at this period a marvellous power of assimilation. I absorbed everything which he told me. His books were at my disposal and he had a very extensive library. Upon the days when we walked to Issy he went with me to the heights of La Solitude, and there he taught me Syriac. We talked together over the Syriac New Testament of Guthier. M. Le Hir determined my career. I was by instinct a philologist, and I found in him the man best fitted to develop this aptitude. Whatever claim to the title of savant I may possess I owe to M. Le Hir. I often think, even, that whatever I have not learnt from him has been imperfectly acquired. Thus he did not know much of Arabic, and this is why I have always been a poor Arabic scholar.

A circumstance due to the kindness of my teachers confirmed me in my calling of a philologist and, unknown to them, unclosed for me a door which I had not dared open for myself. In 1844, M. Garnier was compelled by old age to give up his lectures on Hebrew. M. Le Hir succeeded him, and knowing how thoroughly I had assimilated his doctrine he determined to let me take the grammar course. This pleasant information was conveyed to me by

M. Carbon with his usual good nature, and he added that the Company would give me three hundred francs by way of salary. The sum seemed to me such an enormous one that I told M. Carbon I could not accept it. He insisted, however, on my taking a hundred and fifty francs for the purchase of books.

A much higher favour was that by which I was allowed to attend M. Etienne Quatremère's lectures at the Collège de France twice a week. M. Quatremère did not bestow much preparatory labour upon his lectures; in the matter of Biblical exegesis he had voluntarily kept apart from the scientific movement. He much more nearly resembled M. Garnier than M. Le Hir. Just another such a Jansenist as Silvestre de Sacy, he shared the demi-rationalism of Hug and Jahn—minimising the proportion of the supernatural as far as possible, especially in the cases of what he called "miracles difficult to carry out," such as the miracle of Joshua, but still retaining the principle, at all events in respect to the miracles of the New Testament. This superficial eclecticism did not much take my fancy. M. Le Hir was much nearer the truth in not attempting to attenuate the matter recounted, and in closely studying, after the manner of Ewald, the recital itself. As a comparative grammarian, M. Quatremère was also very inferior to M. Le Hir. But his erudition in regard to orientalism was enormous. A new world opened before me, and I

saw that what apparently could only be of interest to priests might be of interest to laymen as well. The idea often occurred to me from that time that I should one day teach from the same table, in the small classroom to which I have as a matter of fact succeeded in forcing my way.

This obligation to classify and systematize my ideas in view of lessons to be given to fellow-pupils of the same age as myself decided my vocation. My scheme of teaching was from that moment determined upon ; and whatever I have since accomplished in the way of philology has its origin in the humble lecture which through the kindness of my masters was intrusted to me. The necessity for extending as far as possible my studies in exegesis and Semitic philology compelled me to learn German. I had no elementary knowledge of it, for at St. Nicholas my education had been wholly Latin and French. I do not complain of this. A man need only have a literary knowledge of two languages, Latin and his own ; but he should understand all those which may be useful to him for business or instruction. An obliging fellow pupil from Alsace, M. Kl——, whose name I often see mentioned as rendering services to his compatriots in Paris, kindly helped me at the outset. Literature was to my mind such a secondary matter, amidst the ardent investigation which absorbed me, that I did not at first pay much attention to it.

Nevertheless, I felt a new genius, very different from that of the seventeenth century. I admired it all the more because I did not see any limit to it. The spirit peculiar to Germany at the close of the last century, and in the first half of the present one, had a very striking effect upon me ; I felt as if entering a place of worship. This was just what I was in search of, the conciliation of a truly religious spirit with the spirit of criticism. There were times when I was sorry that I was not a Protestant, so that I might be a philosopher without ceasing to be a Christian. Then, again, I recognised the fact that the Catholics alone are consistent. A single error proves that a Church is not infallible ; one weak part proves that a book is not a revealed one. Outside rigid orthodoxy, there was nothing, so far as I could see, except free thought after the manner of the French school of the eighteenth century. My familiarity with the German studies placed me in a very false position ; for upon the one hand it proved to me the impossibility of an exegesis which did not make any concessions, while upon the other hand I quite saw that the masters of St. Sulpice were quite right in refusing to make these concessions, inasmuch as a single confession of error ruins the whole edifice of absolute truth, and reduces it to the level of human authorities in which each person makes his selections according to his individual fancy.

For in a divine book everything must be true, and as two contradictories cannot both be true, it must not contain any contradiction. But the careful study of the Bible which I had undertaken, while revealing to me many historical and esthetic treasures, proved to me also that it was not more exempt than any other ancient book from contradictions, inadvertencies, and errors. It contains fables, legends, and other traces of purely human composition. It is no longer possible for any one to assert that the second part of the book of Isaiah was written by Isaiah. The book of Daniel, which, according to all orthodox tenets, relates to the period of the captivity, is an apocryphal work composed in the year 169 or 170 B.C. The book of Judith is an historical impossibility. The attribution of the Pentateuch to Moses does not bear investigation, and to deny that several parts of Genesis are mystical in their meaning is equivalent to admitting as actual realities descriptions such as that of the Garden of Eden, the apple, and Noah's Ark. He is not a true Catholic who departs in the smallest iota from the traditional theses. What becomes of the miracle which Bossuet so admired: "Cyrus referred to two hundred years before his birth"? What becomes of the seventy weeks of years, the basis of the calculations of universal history, if that part of Isaiah in which Cyrus is referred to was composed during the lifetime of that warrior, and if

the pseudo-Daniel is a contemporary of Antiochus Epiphanes ?

Orthodoxy calls upon us to believe that the biblical books are the work of those to whom their titles assign them. The mildest Catholic doctrine as to inspiration will not allow one to admit that there is any marked error in the sacred text, or any contradiction in matters which do not relate either to faith or morality. Well, let us allow that out of the thousand disputes between critique and orthodox apologetics as to the details of the so-called sacred text there are some in which by accident and contrary to appearances the latter are in the right. It is impossible that it can be right in all the thousand cases, and it has only to be wrong once for all the theory as to its inspiration to be reduced to nothing. This theory of inspiration, implying a supernatural fact, becomes impossible to uphold in the presence of the decided ideas of our modern common sense. An inspired book is a miracle. It should present itself to us under conditions totally different from any other book. It may be said : "You are not so exacting in respect to Herodotus and the poems of Homer." This is quite true, but then Herodotus and the Homeric poems do not profess to be inspired books.

With regard to contradictions, for instance, no one whose mind is free from theological preoccupations can do other than admit the irreconcilable diver-

gences between the synoptists and the author of the Fourth Gospel, and between the synoptists compared with one another. For us rationalists this is not of much importance; but the orthodox reasoner, compelled to be of opinion that his book is right in every particular, finds himself involved in endless subtleties. Silvestre de Sacy was very much perplexed by the quotations from the Old Testament which are met with in the New. He found it so difficult, with his predilection for accuracy in quotations, to reconcile them that he eventually admitted as a principle that the two Testaments are both infallible of themselves, but that the New Testament is not so when it quotes the Old. Only those who have no sort of experience in the ways of religion will feel any surprise that men of such great powers of application should have clung to such untenable positions. In these shipwrecks of a faith upon which you have centred your life, you cling to the most unlikely means of salvage rather than allow all you cherish to go to the bottom.

Men of the world who believe that people are brought to a decision in the choice of their opinions by reasons of sympathy or antipathy will no doubt be surprised at the train of reasoning which alienated me from the Christian faith, to which I had so many motives, both of interest and inclination, for remaining attached.

Those who have not the scientific spirit can scarcely understand that one's opinions are formed outside of one by a sort of impersonal concretion of which one is, so to speak, the spectator. In thus letting my course be shaped by the force of events, I believed myself to be conforming to the rules of the seventeenth century school, especially to those of Malebranche, whose first principle is that reason should be contemplated, that man has no part in its procreation, and that his sole duty is to stand before the truth, free from all personal bias, ready to let himself be led whither the balance of demonstration wills it. So far from having at the outset certain results in view, these illustrious thinkers urged in the interests of the truth the obliteration of anything like a wish, a tendency, or a personal attachment. The great reproach of the preachers of the seventeenth century against the libertines was that they had embraced their desires and had adopted irreligious opinions because they wished them to be true.

In this great struggle between my reason and my beliefs I was careful to avoid a single reasoning from abstract philosophy. The method of natural and physical sciences which at Issy had imposed itself upon me as an absolute law led me to distrust all system. I was never stopped by any objection with regard to the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation regarded in themselves. These dogmas,

occurring in the metaphysical ether did not shock any opposite opinion in me. Nothing that was open to criticism in the policy and tendency of the Church, either in the past or the present, made the slightest impression upon me. If I could have believed that theology and the Bible were true, none of the doctrines which were afterwards embodied in the *Syllabus*, and which were thereupon more or less promulgated, would have given me any trouble. My reasons were entirely of a philological and critical order ; not in the least of a metaphysical, political, or moral kind. These orders of ideas seemed scarcely tangible or capable of being applied in any sense. But the question as to whether there are contradictions between the Fourth Gospel and the synoptics is one which there can be no difficulty in grasping. I can see these contradictions with such absolute clearness that I would stake my life, and, consequently, my eternal salvation, upon their reality without a moment's hesitation. In a question of this kind there can be none of those subterfuges which involve all moral and political opinions in so much doubt. I do not admire either Philip II. or Pius V., but if I had no material reasons for disbelieving the Catholic creed, the atrocities of the former and the faggots of the latter would not be obstacles to my faith.

Many eminent minds have on various occasions

hinted to me that I should never have broken away from Catholicism if I had not formed so narrow a view of it ; or if, to put it in another way, my teachers had not given me this narrow view of it. Some people hold St. Sulpice partially responsible for my incredulity, and reproach that establishment upon the one hand with having inspired me with too complete a trust in a scholasticism which implied an exaggerated rationalism, and, upon the other, with having required me to admit as necessary to salvation the *summum* of orthodoxy, thus inordinately increasing the amount of sustenance to be swallowed, while they narrowed in undue proportions the orifice through which it was to pass. This is very unfair. The directors of St. Sulpice, in representing Christianity in this light, and by being so open as to the measure of belief required, were simply acting like honest men. They were not the persons who would have added the gratifying *est de fide* after a number of untenable propositions. One of the worst kinds of intellectual dishonesty is to play upon words, to represent Christianity as imposing scarcely any sacrifice upon reason, and in this way to inveigle people into it without letting them know to what they have committed themselves. This is where Catholic laymen, who dub themselves liberals, are under such a delusion. Ignorant of theology and exegesis, they treat accession to Christianity as if it were a mere adhesion to a coterie. They pick and

choose, admitting one dogma and rejecting another, and then they are very indignant if any one tells them that they are not true Catholics. No one who has studied theology can be guilty of such inconsistency, as in his eyes everything rests upon the infallible authority of the Scripture and the Church ; he has no choice to make. To abandon a single dogma or reject a single tenet in the teaching of the Church, is equivalent to the negation of the Church and of Revelation. In a church founded upon divine authority, it is as much an act of heresy to deny a single point as to deny the whole. If a single stone is pulled out of the building, the whole edifice must come to the ground.

Nor is there any good to be gained by saying that the Church will perhaps some day make concessions which will avert the necessity of ruptures, such as that which I felt forced upon me, and that it will then be seen that I have renounced the kingdom of God for a trumpery cause. I am perfectly well aware how far the Church can go in the way of concession, and I know what are the points upon which it is useless to ask her for any. The Catholic Church will never abandon a jot or tittle of her scholastic and orthodox system ; she can no more do so than the Comte de Chambord can cease to be legitimist. I have no doubt that there will be schisms, more, perhaps, than ever before, but the true Catholic will be inflexible in

the declaration : "If I must abandon my past, I shall abandon the whole ; for I believe in everything upon the principle of infallibility, and this principle is as much affected by one small concession as by ten thousand large ones." For the Catholic Church to admit that Daniel was an apocryphal person of the time of the Maccabæi, would be to admit that she had made a mistake ; if she was mistaken in that, she may have been mistaken in others, and she is no longer divinely inspired.

I do not, therefore, in any way regret having been brought into contact, for my religious education, with sincere teachers, who would have scrupulously avoided letting me labour under any illusion as to what a Catholic is required to admit. The Catholicism which was taught me is not the insipid compromise, suitable only for laymen, which has led to so many misunderstandings in the present day. My Catholicism was that of Scripture, of the councils, and of the theologians. This Catholicism I loved, and I still respect it ; having found it inadmissible, I separated myself from it. This is a straightforward course, but what is not straightforward is to pretend ignorance of the engagement contracted, and to become the apologist of things concerning which one is ignorant. I have never lent myself to a falsehood of this description, and I have looked upon it as disrespectful to the faith to practise deceit with it. It is no fault of mine if my

masters taught me logic, and by their uncompromising arguments made my mind as trenchant as a blade of steel. I took what was taught me—scholasticism, syllogistic rules, theology, and Hebrew—in earnest; I was an apt student; I am not to be numbered with the lost for that.

THE ST SULPICE SEMINARY

PART IV.

SUCH were these two years of inward labour, which I cannot compare to anything better than a violent attack of encephalitis, during which all my other functions of life were suspended. With a certain amount of Hebraic pedantry, I called this crisis in my life Naphtali,[1] and I often repeated to myself the Hebrew saying: "*Naphtoulé élohim niphtali* (I have fought the fight of God)." My inward feelings were not changed, but each day a stitch in the tissue of my faith was broken; the immense amount of work which I had in hand prevented me from drawing the conclusion. My Hebrew lecture absorbed my whole thoughts; I was like a man holding his breath. My director, to whom I confided my difficulties, replied in just the same terms as M. Gosselin at Issy: "Inroads upon your faith! Pay no heed to that; keep straight on your way." One day he got me to read

[1] *Lucta mea*, Genesis xxx. 8.

the letter which St. François de Sales wrote to Madame de Chantal: "These temptations are but afflictions like unto others. I may tell you that I have known but few persons who have achieved any progress without going through this ordeal; patience is the only remedy. You must not make any reply, nor appear to hear what the enemy says. Let him make as much noise at the door as he likes without so much as exclaiming, 'Who is there?'"

The general practice of ecclesiastical directors is, in fact, to advise those who confess to feeling doubts concerning the faith not to dwell upon them. Instead of postponing the engagements on this account, they rather hurry them forward, thinking that these difficulties will disappear when it is too late to give practical effect to them, and that the cares of an active clerical career will ultimately dispel these speculative doubts. In this regard, I must confess that I found my godly directors rather deficient in wisdom. My director in Paris, a very enlightened man withal, was anxious that I should be at once ordained a sub-deacon, the first of the holy orders which constitutes an irrevocable tie. I refused point-blank. So far as regarded the first steps of the ecclesiastical state, I had obeyed him. It was he himself who pointed out to me that the exact form of the engagement which they imply is contained in the words of the Psalm which are repeated: "The Lord

is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot." Well, I can honestly declare that I have never been untrue to that engagement. I have never had any other interest than that of the truth, and I have made many sacrifices for it. An elevated idea has always sustained me in the conduct of my life, so much so that I am ready to forego the inheritance which, according to our reciprocal arrangement, God ought to restore to me: "*The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly inheritance.*"

My friend in the seminary of St. Brieuc[1] had decided, after much hesitation, to take holy orders. I have found the letter which I wrote to him on the 26th of March, 1844, at a time when my doubts with regard to religion were not disturbing my peace of mind so much as they had done.

"I was pleased but not surprised to hear that you had taken the final step. The uneasiness by which you were beset must always make itself felt in the mind of one who realizes the serious import of assuming the order of priesthood. The trial is a painful but an honourable one, and I should not think much of one who reached the priestly calling without

[1] His name was François Liart. He was a very upright and high minded young man. He died at Tréguier at the end of March, 1845. His family sent me after his death all my letters to him, and I have them still.

having experienced it. . . . I have told you how a power independent of my will shook within me the beliefs which have hitherto been the main foundations of my life and of my happiness. These temptations are cruel indeed, and I should be full of pity for any one who was ever tortured by them. How wanting in tact towards those who have suffered these temptations are the persons who have never been assailed by them. It is no wonder that such should be the case, for one must have had experience of a thing thoroughly to understand it, and the subject is such a delicate one, that I question whether there are any two human beings more incapable of understanding one another than a believer and a doubter, however complete may be their good faith and even their intelligence. They speak two unintelligible languages, unless the grace of God intervenes as an interpreter. I have felt how completely maladies of this kind are beyond all human remedy, and that God has reserved the treatment of them to himself, *manu mitissimâ et suavissimâ pertractans vulnera mea*, to quote St. Augustin, who evidently speaks from experience. At times the *Angelus Satanæ qui me colaphizet* wakes up. Such, my dear friend, is our fate, and we must abide by it. *Converte te sufra, converte te infra*, life, especially for the clergy, is a battle, and perhaps in the long run, these storms are better for man than a dead calm, which

would send him to sleep. . . . I can hardly bring myself to fancy that within a twelvemonth you will be a priest, you who were my schoolfellow and friend as a boy. And now we are halfway through life, according to the ordinary mode of reckoning, and the second half will probably not be the pleasanter of the two. This surely should make us look upon passing ills as of no account, and endure with patience the troubles of a few days, at which we shall smile in a few years' time, and not think of in eternity. Vanity of vanities!"

A year later the malady, which I thought was only a fleeting one, had spread to my whole conscience. Upon the 22nd of March, 1845, I wrote a letter to my friend which he could not read, as he was on his deathbed when it reached him.

"My position in the seminary has not varied much since our last conversation. I am allowed to attend all the lectures on Syriac of M. Quatremère, at the Collège de France, and I find them extremely interesting. They are useful to me in many ways; in the first place by enabling me to learn much that is useful and attractive, and by distracting my mind from certain subjects. . . . I should be quite happy if it were not that the painful thoughts of which you are aware were ever afflicting my mind at an increasingly rapid rate. I have quite made up my mind not to accept the grade of sub deacon at the next ordination.

This will not excite any notice, as owing to my age, I should be compelled to allow a certain interval to elapse between my different orders. Nor, for the matter of that, is there any reason why I should care for what people think. I must accustom myself to brave public opinion, so as to be ready for any sacrifice. I suffer much at times. This Holy Week, for instance, has been particularly painful for me, for every incident which bears me away from my ordinary life, revives all my anxious doubts. I console myself by thinking of Jesus, so beautiful, so pure, so ideal in His suffering —Jesus whom I hope to love always. Even if I should ever abandon Him, that would give Him pleasure, for it would be a sacrifice made to my conscience, and God knows that it would be a costly one! I think that you, at all events, would understand how costly it would be. How little freedom of choice man has in the ordering of his destiny. When no more than a child who acts from impulse and the sense of imitation, one is called upon to stake one's whole existence; a higher power entangles you in indissoluble toils; this power pursues its work in silence, and before you have begun to know your own self, you are tied and bound, you know not how. When you reach a certain age, you wake up and would like to move. But it is impossible; your hands and arms are caught in inextricable folds. It is God Himself who holds you fast, and remorseless

opinion is looking on, ready to laugh if you signify that you are tired of the toys which amused you as a child. It would be nothing if there was only public opinion to brave. But the pity is that all the softest ties of your life are woven into the web that entangles you, and you must pluck out one-half of your heart if you would escape from it. Many a time I have wished that man was born either completely free, or deprived of all freedom. He would not be so much to be pitied if he was born like the plant family, fixed to the soil which is to give it nourishment. With the dole of liberty allowed to him, he is strong enough to resist, but not strong enough to act ; he has just what is required to make him unhappy. 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?' How is all this to be reconciled with the sway of a father ? There are mysteries in all this, and happy is he who fathoms them only in speculation.

"It is only because you are so true a friend that I tell you all this. I have no need to ask you to keep it to yourself. You will understand that I must be very circumspect with regard to my mother. I would rather die than cause her a moment's pain. O God ! shall I have the strength of mind to give my duty the preference over her ? I commend her to you ; she is very pleased with your attentiveness to her. This is the most real kindness you can do me."

THE ST SUPLICE SEMINARY

PART V.

I THUS reached the vacation of 1845, which I spent, as I had the preceding ones, in Brittany. There I had much more time for reflection. The grains of sand of my doubts accumulated into a solid mass. My director, who, with the best intentions in the world, gave me bad advice, was no longer within my reach. I ceased to take part in the sacraments of the Church, though I still retained my former fondness for its prayers. Christianity appeared to me greater than ever before, but I could only cling to the supernatural by an effort of habit—by a sort of fiction with myself. The task of logic was done; that of honesty was about to begin. For nearly two months I was Protestant; I could not make up my mind to abandon altogether the great religious tradition which had hitherto been part of my life; I mused upon future reforms, when the philosophy of Christianity, disencumbered of all superstitious

dross and yet preserving its moral efficacity (that was my great dream), would be left the great school of humanity and its guide to the future. My readings in German gave nurture to these ideas. Herder was the German writer with whom I was most familiar. His vast views delighted me, and I said to myself, with keen regret, if I could but think all that like a Herer and remain a priest, a Christian preacher. But with my notions at once precise and respectful of Catholicism, I could not succeed in conceiving any honourable way of remaining a Catholic priest while retaining my opinions. I was Christian after the fashion of a professor of theology at Halle or Tubingen. An inward voice told me: "Thou art no longer Catholic; thy robe is a lie; cast it off."

I was a Christian, however; for all the papers of that date which I have preserved give clear expression to the feeling which I have since endeavoured to portray in the *Vie de Jésus*, I mean a keen regard for the evangelic ideal and for the character of the Founder of Christianity. The idea that in abandoning the Church I should remain faithful to Jesus got hold upon me, and if I could have brought myself to believe in apparitions I should certainly have seen Jesus saying to me: "Abandon Me to become My disciple." This thought sustained and emboldened me. I may say that from that moment

my *Vie de Jésus* was mentally written. Belief in the eminent personality of Jesus—which is the spirit of that book—had been my mainstay in my struggle against theology. Jesus has in reality ever been my master. In following out the truth at the cost of any sacrifice I was convinced that I was following Him and obeying the most imperative of His precepts.

I was at this time so far removed from my old Brittany masters in respect to disposition, intellectual culture and study that conversation between us had become almost impossible. One of them suspected something, and said to me: "I have always thought that you were being overdone in the way of study." A habit which I had acquired of reciting the psalms in Hebrew from a small manuscript of my own which I used as a breviary, surprised them very much. They were half inclined to ask me if I was a Jew. My mother guessed all that was taking place without quite understanding it. I continued, as in my childhood, to take long walks into the country with her. One day, we sat down in the valley of Guindy, near the Chapelle des Cinq Plaies, by the side of the spring. For hours I read by her side, without raising my eyes from the book, which was a very harmless one—M. de Bonald's *Recherches Philosophiques*. Nevertheless the book displeased her, and she snatched it away from me, feeling that books of

the same description, if not this particular one, were what she had to dread.

Upon the 6th of September, 1845, I wrote to M. ——, my director, the following letter, a copy of which I have found among my papers, and which I reproduce without in any way attenuating its somewhat inconsistent and feverish tone :—

"SIR,—Having had to make two or three journeys at the beginning of the vacation, I have been unable to correspond with you as early as I could have wished. I was none the less urgently in need of unbosoming myself to you with regard to pangs which increase in intensity each day, and which I feel all the keener because there is no one here to whom I can confide them. What ought to make for my happiness causes me the deepest sorrow. An imperious sense of duty compels me to concentrate my thoughts upon myself, in order to spare pain to those who surround me with their affection, and who would moreover be quite incapable of understanding my perplexity. Their kindness and soothing words cut me to the quick. Oh, if they only knew what was going on in the recesses of my heart! Since my stay here I have acquired some important data towards the solution of the great problem which is preoccupying my mind. Several circumstances have, to begin with, made me realise the greatness of the

sacrifice which God required of me, and into what an abyss the course which my conscience prescribes must plunge me. It is useless to describe them to you in detail, as, after all, considerations of this kind can be of no weight in the resolution which has to be taken. To have abandoned a path which I had selected from my childhood, and which led without danger to the pure and noble aims which I had set before myself, in order to tread another along which I could discern nothing but uncertainty and disappointment; to have disregarded the opinion which will have only blame in store for what is really an honest act on my part, would have been a small thing, if I had not at the same time been compelled to tear out part of my heart, or, to speak more accurately, to pierce another to which my own was so deeply attached. Filial love had grown in proportion as so many other affections were crushed out. Well, it is in this part of my being that duty exacts from me the most painful sacrifice. My leaving the seminary will be an inexplicable enigma to my mother; she will believe that I have killed her out of sheer caprice.

"Truly may I say that when I envisage the inextricable mesh in which God has ensnared me while my reason and freedom were asleep, while I was following with docile steps the path He had Himself traced out for me, distracting thoughts crowd them-

selves upon me. God knows that I was simple-minded and pure; I took nothing upon myself; I walked with free and unflagging steps in the path which He disclosed before me, and behold this path has led me to the brink of a precipice! God has betrayed me! I never doubted but that a wise and merciful Providence governed the universe and governed me in the course which I was to take. It is not, however, without considerable effort that I have been able to apply so formal a contradiction to apparent facts. I often say to myself that vulgar common sense is little capable of appreciating the providential government whether of humanity, of the universe, or of the individual. The isolated consideration of facts would scarcely tend to optimism. It requires a strong dose of optimism to credit God with this generosity in spite of experience. I hope that I shall never feel any hesitation upon this point, and that whatever may be the ills which Providence yet has in store for me I shall ever believe that it is guiding me to the highest possible good through the least possible evil.

"According to what I hear from Germany, the situation which was offered me there is still open;[1] only I cannot enter upon it before the spring. This makes my journey thither very doubtful, and throws

[1] This has reference to a post of private tutor which was at my disposal for a time.

me back into fresh perplexities. I am also advised to go through a year of free study in Paris, during which time I should be able to reflect upon my future career, and also take my university degrees. I am very much inclined to adopt this last-named course, for though I have made up my mind to come back to the seminary and confer with you and the superiors, I should nevertheless be very reluctant to make a long stay there in my present condition of mind. It is with the utmost apprehension that I mark the near approach of the time when my inward irresolution must find expression in a most decided course of action. Hard it is to have thus to reascend the stream down which one has for so long been gently floated! If only I could be sure of the future, and of being one day able to secure for my ideas their due place, and follow up at my ease and free from all external preoccupations the work of my intellectual and moral improvement! But even could I be sure of myself, how could I be of the circumstances which force themselves so pitilessly upon us? In truth, I am driven to regret the paltry store of liberty which God has given us; we have enough to make us struggle; not enough to master destiny, just enough to insure suffering.

"Happy are the children who only sleep and dream, and who never have a thought of entering upon this struggle with God Himself! I see around me men of

pure and simple mind, whom Christianity suffices to render virtuous and happy. God grant that they may never develop the miserable faculty of criticism which so imperiously demands satisfaction, and which, when once satisfied, leaves such little happiness in the soul! Would to God that it were in my power to suppress it. I would not hesitate at amputation if it were lawful and possible. Christianity satisfies all my faculties except one, which is the most exacting of them all, because it is by right judge over all the others. Would it not be a contradiction in terms to impose conviction upon the faculty which creates conviction? I am well aware that the orthodox will tell me that it is my own fault if I have fallen into this condition. I will not argue the point; no man knows whether he is worthy of love or hatred. I am quite willing, therefore, to say that it is my fault, provided those who love me promise to pity me and continue me their friendship.

"A result which now seems beyond all doubt is that I shall not revert to orthodoxy by continuing to follow the same line,—I mean that of rational and critical self-examination. Up till now, I hoped that after having travelled over the circle of doubt I should come back to the starting-point. I have quite lost this hope, and a return to Catholicism no longer seems possible to me, except by a receding movement, by stopping short in the path which I have entered, by

stigmatising reason, by declaring it for once and all null and void, and by condemning it to respectful silence. Each step in my career of criticism takes me further away from the starting-point. Have I, then, lost all hope of coming back to Catholicism? That would be too bitter a thought. No, sir, I have no hopes of reverting to it by rational progress; but I have often been on the point of repudiating for once and all the guide whom at times I mistrust. What would then be the motive of my life? I cannot tell; but activity will ever find scope. You may be sure that I must have been sorely forced to have dwelt for one instant upon a thought which seems more cruel to me than death. And yet, if my conscience represented it to me as lawful, I should eagerly avail myself of it, if only out of common decency.

"I hope at all events that those who know me will admit that interested motives have not estranged me from Christianity. Have not all my material interests tempted me to find it true? The temporal considerations against which I have had to struggle would have sufficed to persuade many others; my heart has need of Christianity; the Gospel will ever be my moral law; the church has given me my education, and I love her. Could I but continue to style myself her son! I pass from her in spite of myself; I abhor the dishonest attacks levelled at her;

I frankly confess that I have no complete substitute for her teaching; but I cannot disguise from myself the weak points which I believe that I have found in it and with regard to which it is impossible to effect a compromise, because we have to do with a doctrine in which all the component parts hold together and cannot be detached.

"I sometimes regret that I was not born in a land where the bonds of orthodoxy are less tightly drawn than in Catholic countries. For, at whatever cost, I am resolved to be a Christian; but I cannot be an orthodox Catholic. When I find such independent and bold thinkers as Herder, Kant, and Fichte, calling themselves Christians, I should like to be so too. But can I be so in the Catholic faith, which is like a bar of iron? and you cannot reason with a bar of iron. Will not some one found amongst us a rational and critical Christianity? I will confess to you that I believe that I have discovered in some German writers the true kind of Christianity which is adapted to us. May I live to see this Christianity assuming a form capable of fully satisfying all the requirements of our age! May I myself cooperate in the great work! What so grieves me is the thought that perhaps it will be needful to be a priest in order to accomplish that; and I could not become a priest without being guilty of hypocrisy.

"Forgive me, sir, these thoughts, which must seem

very reprehensible to you. You are aware that all this has not as yet any dogmatic consistence in me ; I still cling to the Church, my venerable mother ; I recite the Psalms with heartfelt accents ; I should, if I followed the bent of my inclination, pass hours at a time in church ; gentle, plain, and pure piety touches me to the very heart ; and I even have sharp relapses of devotional feeling. All this cannot coexist without contradiction with my general condition. But I have once for all made up my mind on the subject ; I have cast off the inconvenient yoke of consistency, at all events for the time. Will God condemn me for having simultaneously admitted that which my different faculties simultaneously exact, although I am unable to reconcile their contradictory demands ? Are there not periods in the history of the human mind when contradiction is necessary ? When the moral verities are under examination, doubt is unavoidable ; and yet during this period of transition the pure and noble mind must still be moral, thanks to a contradiction. Thus it is that I am at times both Catholic and Rationalist ; but holy orders I can never take, for 'once a priest, always a priest.'

"In order to keep my letter within due limits, I must bring the long story of my inward struggles to a close. I thank God, who has seen fit to put me through so severe a trial, for having brought me into contact with a mind such as yours, which is so well

able to understand this trial, and to whom I can confide it without reserve."

M—— wrote me a very kind-hearted reply, offering a merely formal opposition to my project of following my own course of study. My sister, whose high intelligence had for years been like the pillar of fire which lighted my path, wrote from Poland to encourage me in my resolution, which was finally taken at the end of September. It was a very honest and straightforward act; and it is one which I now look back upon with the greatest satisfaction. But what a cruel severance. It was upon my mother's account that I suffered the most. I was compelled to inflict a deep wound upon her without being able to give the slightest explanation. Although gifted with much native intelligence, she was not sufficiently educated to understand that a person's religious faith can be affected because he has discovered that the Messianic explanations of the Psalms are erroneous, and that Gesenius, in his commentary upon Isaiah, is in nearly every point right when combating the arguments of the orthodox. It grieved me much, also, to give pain to my old Brittany masters, who retained such kindly feelings towards me. The critical question, as it represented itself to my mind, would have seemed absolutely unintelligible to them, so plain and unquestioning was their faith. I went back to Paris therefore without letting them know anything

more than that I was likely to travel, and that my ecclesiastical studies might possibly be suspended.

The masters of St. Sulpice, accustomed to take a broader view of things, were not very much surprised. M. Le Hir, who placed an unlimited confidence in study, and who also knew how steady my conduct was, did not dissuade me from devoting a few years to free study in Paris, and sketched out the course which I was to follow at the Collège de France and at the School of Eastern Languages. M. Carbon was grieved; he saw how different my position must become, and he promised to try and find me a quiet and honourable position. M. Dupanloup[1] displayed in this matter the high and hearty appreciation of spiritual things which constituted his superiority. I spoke very frankly to him. The critical side of the question did not in any way impress him, and my allusion to German criticism took him by surprise. The labours of M. Le Hir were almost unknown to him. Scripture in his eyes was only useful in supplying preachers with eloquent passages, and Hebrew was of no use for that purpose. But how kind and generous-hearted he was! I have now before me a short note from him, in which he says: "Do you want any money? This would be natural enough in your position. My humble purse is at your service. I should like to be able to

[1] M. Dupanloup was no longer superior of the Petty Seminary of Saint Nicholas du Chardonnet.

offer you more precious gifts. I hope that my plain and simple offer will not offend you." I declined his kind offer with thanks, but there was no merit in my refusal, for my sister Henriette had sent me twelve hundred francs to tide over this crisis. I scarcely touched this sum, but nevertheless, by relieving me of any immediate apprehension for the morrow, it was the foundation of the independence and of the dignity of my whole life.

Thus, on the 6th of October, 1845, I went down, never again to remount them in priestly dress, the steps of the St. Sulpice seminary. I crossed the courtyard as quickly as I could, and went to the hotel which then stood at the north-west corner of the esplanade, not at that time thrown open, as it is now.

FIRST STEPS OUTSIDE ST SULPICE

ERNEST RENAN IN 1855

(*Mm. Perrin & Cie., of Paris*)

[*face p. 289*

FIRST STEPS OUTSIDE ST SULPICE

PART I.

THE name of this hotel I do not remember; it was always spoken of as "Mademoiselle Céleste's," this being the name of the worthy person who managed or owned it.

There was certainly no other hotel like it in Paris, for it was a kind of annex to the seminary, the rules of which were to a great extent in force there. Lodgers were not admitted without a letter of introduction from one of the directors of the seminary or some other notability in the religious world. It was here that students who wished for a few days to themselves before entering or leaving the seminary used to stay, while priests and superiors of convents whom business brought to Paris found it comfortable and inexpensive. The transition from the priestly to the ordinary dress is like the change which occurs in a chrysalis; it needs a little shade. Assuredly, if any one could narrate all the silent and unobtrusive

romances associated with this ancient hotel, now pulled down, we should hear some very interesting stories. I must not, however, let my meaning be mistaken, for, like many ecclesiastics still alive, I can testify to the blameless course of life in Mlle. Céleste's hotel.

While I was awaiting here the completion of my metamorphosis, M. Carbon's good offices were being busily employed upon my behalf. He had written to Abbé Gratry, at that time director of the Collège Stanislas, and the latter offered me a place as usher in the upper division. M. Dupanloup advised me to accept it, remarking: "You may rest assured that M. Gratry is a priest of the highest distinction." I accepted, and was very kindly treated by every one, but I did not retain the place more than a fortnight. I found that my new situation involved my making the outward profession of clericalism, the avoidance of which was my reason for leaving the seminary. Thus my relations with M. Gratry were but fleeting. He was a kindhearted man, and a rather clever writer, but there was nothing in him. His indecision of mind did not suit me at all. M. Carbon and M. Dupanloup had told him why I had left St. Sulpice. We had two or three conversations, in the course of which I explained to him my doubts, based upon an examination of the texts. He did not in the least understand me, and with his transcendentalism he

must have looked upon my rigid attention to details as very commonplace. He knew nothing of ecclesiastical science, whether exegesis or theology; his capabilities not extending beyond hollow phrases, trifling applications of mathematics, and the region of "matter of fact." I was not slow to perceive how immensely superior the theology of St. Sulpice was to these hollow combinations which would fain pass muster as scientific. St. Sulpice has a knowledge at first hand of what Christianity is; the Polytechnic School has not But I repeat, there could be no two opinions as to the uprightness of M. Gratry, who was a very taking and highminded man.

I was sorry to part company with him; but there was no help for it. I had left the first seminary in the world for one in every respect inferior to it. The leg had been badly set; I had the courage to break it a second time. On the 2nd or 3rd of November, I passed from out the last threshold appertaining to the Church, and I obtained a place as "assistant master *au pair*"—to employ the phrase used in the Quartier Latin of those days—without salary, in a school of the St. Jacques district attached to the Lycée Henri IV. I had a small bedroom, and took my meals with the scholars, and as my time was not occupied for more than two hours a day, I was able to do a good deal of work upon my own account. This was just what I wanted.

FIRST STEPS OUTSIDE ST SULPICE

PART II.

CONSTITUTED as I am to find my own company quite sufficient, the humble dwelling in the Rue des Deux Églises (now the Rue de l'Abbé de l'Épée) would have been a paradise for me had it not been for the terrible crisis which my conscience was passing through, and the altered direction which I was compelled to give to my existence. The fish in Lake Baïkal have, it is said, taken thousands of years in their transformation from salt to fresh water fish. I had to effect my transition in a few weeks. Catholicism, like a fairy circle, casts such a powerful spell upon one's whole life, that when one is deprived of it everything seems aimless and gloomy. I felt terribly out of my element. The whole universe seemed to me like an arid and chilly desert. With Christianity untrue, everything else appeared to me indifferent, frivolous, and undeserving of interest. The shattering of my career left me with a sense of aching void, like what

may be felt by one who has had an attack of fever or a blighted affection. The struggle which had engrossed my whole soul had been so ardent that all the rest appeared to me petty and frivolous. The world discovered itself to me as mean and deficient in virtue. I seemed to have lost caste, and to have fallen upon a nest of pigmies.

My sorrow was much increased by the grief which I had been compelled to inflict upon my mother. I resorted, perhaps wrongly, to certain artifices with the view, as I hoped, of sparing her pain. Her letters went to my heart. She supposed my position to be even more painful than it was in reality, and as she had, despite our poverty, rather spoilt me, she thought that I should never be able to withstand any hardship. "When I remember how a poor little mouse kept you from sleeping, I am at a loss to know how you will get on," she wrote to me. She passed her time singing the Marseilles hymns,[1] of which she was so fond, especially the hymn of Joseph, beginning—

> "O Joseph, ô mon aimable
> Fils affable."

When she wrote to me in this strain, my heart was fit to break. As a child, I was in the habit of asking her ten times over in the course of the day—"Mother,

[1] A collection of hymns of the sixteenth century, touching in their simplicity. I have my mother's old copy; I may perhaps write something about them hereafter.

have I been good?" The idea of a rupture between us was most cruel. I accordingly resorted to various devices in order to prove to her that I was still the same tender son that I had been in the past. In time the wound healed, and when she saw that I was as tender and loving towards her as ever, she readily agreed that there might be more than one way of being a priest, and that nothing was changed in me except the dress, which was the literal truth.

My ignorance of the world was thorough-paced. I knew nothing except of literary matters, and as my only real knowledge was that which I gained at St. Sulpice, I have always been like a child in all worldly matters. I did not therefore make any effort to render my material position as good as the circumstances admitted. The one object of life seemed to me to be thought. The educational profession being the one which comes nearest to the clerical one, I selected it almost without reflection. It was hard, no doubt, after having reached the maximum of intellectual culture, and having held a post of some honour, to descend to the lowest rank. I was better versed than any living Frenchman, with the exception of M. Le Hir, in the comparative theory of the Semitic languages, and my position was no better than that of an under-master; I was a savant, and I had not taken a degree. But the inward contentment of my own conscience was enough for me. I never

felt a shadow of regret at the decision which I had come to in October, 1845.

I had my reward, moreover, the day after I entered the humble school in which I was to occupy for three years and a-half such a lowly position. Among the pupils was one who, owing to his successes and rapid progress, held a place of his own in the school. He was eighteen years old, and even at that early age the philosophical spirit, the concentrated ardour, the passionate love of truth, and the inventive sagacity which have since made his name celebrated were apparent to those who knew him. I refer to M. Berthelot, whose room was next to mine. From the day that we knew each other, we became fast friends. Our eagerness to learn was equally great, and we had both had very different kinds of culture. We accordingly threw all that we knew into the same seething cauldron which served to boil joints of very different kinds. Berthelot taught me what was not to be learnt in the seminary, while I taught him theology and Hebrew. Berthelot purchased a Hebrew Bible, which, I believe, is still in his library with its leaves uncut. He did not get much beyond the *Shevas*, the counter attractions of the laboratory being too great. Our mutual honesty and straightforwardness brought us closer together. Berthelot introduced me to his father, one of those gifted doctors such as may be found in Paris. The father was a

Gallican of the old school, and very advanced in his political views. He was the first Republican I had ever seen, and it took me some time to familiarize myself with the idea. But he was something more than that : he was a model of charity and self-devotion. He assured the scientific career of his son by enabling him to devote himself up to the age of thirty to his speculative researches without having to obtain any remunerative post which would have interfered with his studies. In politics, Berthelot remained true to the principles of his father. This is the only point upon which we have not always been agreed. For my part I should willingly resign myself, if the opportunity arose (I must say that it seems to grow more distant every day), to serve, for the greater good of humanity now so sadly out of gear, a tyrant who was philanthropic, well-instructed, intelligent, and liberal.

Our discussions were interminable, and we were always resuming the same subject. We passed part of the night in searching out together the topics upon which we were engaged. After some little time, M. Berthelot, having completed his special mathematical studies at the Lycée Henri IV., went back to his father, who lived at the foot of the Tour Saint Jacques de la Boucherie. When he came to see me in the evening at the Rue de l'Abbé de l'Epée, we used to converse for hours, and then I used to walk

back with him to the Tour Saint Jacques. But as our conversation was rarely concluded when we got back to his door, he returned with me, and then I went back with him, this game of battledore and shuttlecock being renewed several times. Social and philosophical questions must be very hard to solve, seeing that we could not with all our energy settle them. The crisis of 1848 had a very great effect upon us. This fateful year was not more successful than we had been in solving the problems which it had set itself, but it demonstrated the fragility of many things which were supposed to be solid, and to young and active minds it seemed like the lowering of a curtain of clouds upon the horizon.

The profound affection which thus bound M. Berthelot and myself together was unquestionably of a very rare and singular kind. It so happened that we were both of an essentially objective nature ; a nature, that is to say, perfectly free from the narrow whirlwind which converts most consciences into an egotistical gulf like the conical cavity of the formica-leo. Accustomed each to pay very little attention to himself, we paid very little attention to one another. Our friendship consisted in what we mutually learnt, in a sort of common fermentation which a remarkable conformity of intellectual organization produced in us in regard to the same objects. Anything which we had both seen in the same light seemed to us a

certainty. When we first became acquainted, I still retained a tender attachment for Christianity. Berthelot also inherited from his father a remnant of Christian belief. A few months sufficed to relegate these vestiges of faith to that part of our souls reserved for memory. The statement that everything in the world is of the same colour, that there is no special supernatural or momentary revelation, impressed itself upon our minds as unanswerable. The scientific purview of a universe in which there is no appreciable trace of any free will superior to that of man became, from the first months of 1846, the immovable anchor from which we never shifted. We shall never move from this position until we shall have encountered in nature some one specially intentional fact having its cause outside the free will of man or the spontaneous action of the animal.

Thus our friendship was somewhat analogous to that of two eyes when they look steadily at the same object, and when from two images the brain receives one and the same perception. Our intellectual growth was like the phenomenon which occurs through a sort of action due to close contact and to passive complicity. M. Berthelot looked as favourably upon what I did as myself; I liked his ways as much as he could have done himself. There was never so much as a trivial vulgarity—I will not say a moral slackening of affection—between us. We were invariably upon the

same terms with each other that people are with a woman for whom they feel respect. When I want to typify what an unexampled pair of friends we were, I always represent two priests in their surplices walking arm in arm. This dress does not debar them from discussing elevated subjects ; but it would never occur to them in such a dress to smoke a cigar, to talk about trifles, or to satisfy the most legitimate requirements of the body. Flaubert, the novelist, could never understand that, as Sainte-Beuve relates, the recluses of Port Royal lived for years in the same house and addressed each other as Monsieur to the day of their death. The fact of the matter is that Flaubert had no sort of idea as to what abstract natures are. Not only did nothing approaching to a familiarity ever pass between us, but we should have hesitated to ask each other for help, or almost for advice. To ask a service would, in our view, be an act of corruption, an injustice towards the rest of the human race ; it would, at all events, be tantamount to acknowledging that there was something to which we attached a value. But we are so well aware that the temporal order of things is vain, empty, hollow, and frivolous, that we hesitate at giving a tangible shape even to friendship. We have too much regard for each other to be guilty of a weakness towards each other. Both alike convinced of the insignificance of human affairs, and possessed of the same aspirations for what is eternal,

we could not bring ourselves to admit having of a set purpose concentrated our thoughts upon what is casual and accidental. For there can be no doubt that ordinary friendship presupposes the conviction that all things are not vain and empty.

Later in life, an intimacy of this kind may at times cease to be felt as a necessity. It recovers all its force whenever the globe of this world, which is ever changing, brings round some new aspect with regard to which we want to consult each other. Whichever of us dies first will leave a great void in the existence of the other. Our friendship reminds me of that of François de Sales and President Favre: "They pass away these years of time, my brother, their months are reduced to weeks, their weeks to days, their days to hours, and their hours to moments, which latter alone we possess, and these only as they fleet." The conviction of the existence of an eternal object embraced in youth, gives a peculiar stability to life. All this is anything but human or natural, you may say! No doubt, but strength is only manifested by running counter to nature. The natural tree does not bear good fruit. The fruit is not good until the tree is trained; that is to say, until it has ceased to be a tree.

FIRST STEPS OUTSIDE ST SULPICE

PART III.

THE friendship of M. Berthelot, and the approbation of my sister, were my two chief consolations during this painful period, when the sentiment of an abstract duty towards truth compelled me at the age of three and twenty to alter the course of a career already fairly entered upon. The change was, in reality, only one of domicile, and of outward surroundings. At bottom I remained the same ; the moral course of my life was scarcely affected by this trial ; the craving for truth, which was the mainspring of my existence, knew no diminution. My habits and ways were but very little modified.

St. Sulpice, in truth, had left its impress so deeply upon me, that for years I remained a St. Sulpice man, not in regard to faith but in habit. The excellent education imparted there, which had exhibited to me the perfection of politeness in M. Gosselin, the perfection of kindness in M. Carbon, the perfection

of virtue in M. Pinault, M. Le Hir and M. Gottofrey, made an indelible impression upon my docile nature. My studies, prosecuted without interruption after I had left the seminary, so completely confirmed me in my presumptions against orthodox theology, that at the end of a twelvemonth, I could scarcely understand how I had formerly been able to believe. But when faith has disappeared, morality remains; for a long time, my programme was to abandon as little as possible of Christianity, and to hold on to all that could be maintained without belief in the supernatural. I sorted, so to speak, the virtues of the St. Sulpice student, discarding those which appertain to a positive belief, and retaining those of which a philosopher can approve. Such is the force of habit. The void sometimes has the same effect as its opposite. *Est pro corde locus.* The fowl whose brain has been removed, will nevertheless, under the influence of certain stimulants, continue to scratch its beak.

I endeavoured, therefore, on leaving St. Sulpice to remain as much of a St. Sulpice man as possible. The studies which I had begun at the seminary had so engrossed me, that my one desire was to resume them. One only occupation seemed worthy to absorb my life, and that was the pursuit of my critical researches upon Christianity by the much larger means which lay science offered me. I also imagined myself to be in the company of my teachers, discussing

objections with them, and proving to them that whole pages of ecclesiastical teaching require alteration.

For some little time, I kept up my relations with them, notably with M. Le Hir, but I gradually came to feel that relations of this kind, between the believer and the unbeliever, grow strained, and I broke off an intimacy which could be profitable and pleasant to myself alone.

In respect to matters of critique, I also held my ground as closely as I possibly could, and thus it comes that, while being unrestrictedly rationalist, I have none the less seemed a thorough conservative in the discussions relating to the age and authenticity of Holy Writ. The first edition of my *Histoire Générale des Langues Sémitiques*, for instance, contains so far as regards the book of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon, several concessions to traditional opinions which I have since eliminated one after the other. In my *Origines du Christianisme*, upon the other hand, this reserved attitude has stood me in good stead, for in writing this essay, I had to face a very exaggerated school—that of the Tübingen Protestants—composed of men devoid of literary tact and moderation, by whom, through the fault of the Catholics, researches as to Jesus and the apostolic age have been almost entirely monopolised. When a reaction sets in against this school, it will be recognised perhaps that my critique, Catholic in its origin, and by degrees freed

from the shackles of tradition, has enabled me to see many things in their true light, and has preserved me from more than one mistake.

But it is in regard to my temperament, more especially, that I have remained in reality the pupil of my old masters. My life, when I pass it in review, has been one long application of their good qualities and their defects; with this difference, that these qualities and defects, having been transferred to the world's stage, have brought out inconsistencies more strongly marked. All's well that ends well, and as my existence has, upon the whole, been a pleasant one, I often amuse myself, like Marcus Aurelius, by calculating how much I owe to the various influences which have traversed my life, and woven the tissue of it. In these calculations, St. Sulpice always comes out as the principal factor. I can venture to speak very freely on this point, for little of the credit is due to me. I was well trained, and that is the secret of the whole matter. My amiability, which is in many cases the result of indifference; my indulgency, which is sincere enough, and is due to the fact that I see clearly how unjust men are to one another; my conscientious habits, which afford me real pleasure, and my infinite capacity for enduring ennui, attributable perhaps to my having been so well inoculated by ennui during my youth that it has never taken since, are all to be explained by the

circle in which I lived, and the profound impressions which I received. Since I left St. Sulpice, I have been constantly losing ground, and yet, with only a quarter the virtues of a St. Sulpice man, I have, I think, been far above the average.

I should like to explain in detail and show how the paradoxical resolve to hold fast to the clerical virtues, without the faith upon which they are based, and in a world for which they are not designed, produced so far as I was concerned, the most amusing encounters. I should like to relate all the adventures which my Sulpician habits brought about, and the singular tricks which they played me. After leading a serious life for sixty years, mirth is no offence, and what source of merriment can be more abundant, more harmless, and more ready to hand than oneself? If a comedy writer should ever be inclined to amuse the public by depicting my foibles I would readily give my assent if he agreed to let me join him in the work, as I could relate things far more amusing than any which he could invent. But I find that I am transgressing the first rule which my excellent masters laid down, viz., never to speak of oneself. I will therefore treat this latter part of my subject very briefly.

FIRST STEPS OUTSIDE ST SULPICE

PART IV.

THE moral teaching inculcated by the pious masters who watched over me so tenderly up to the age of three-and-twenty may be summed up in the four virtues of disinterestedness or poverty, modesty, politeness, and strict morality. I propose to analyse my conduct under these four heads, not in any way with the intention of advertising my own merits, but in order to give those who profess the philosophy of good-natured scepticism an opportunity of exercising their powers of observation at my expense.

I. Poverty is of all the clerical virtues the one which I have practised the most faithfully. M. Olier had painted for his church a picture in which St. Sulpice was represented as laying down the fundamental rule of life for his clerks: *Habentes alimenta et quibus tegamur, his contenti sumus.* This was just my idea, and I could desire nothing better than to be provided with lodging, board, lights, and firing,

without any intervention of my own, by some one who would charge me a fixed sum and leave me entirely my own master. The arrangement which dated from my settlement in the little *pension* of the Faubourg St. Jacques was destined to become the economic basis of my whole life. One or two private lessons which I gave saved me from the necessity of breaking into the twelve hundred francs sent me by my sister. This was just the rule laid down and observed by my masters at Tréguier and St. Sulpice: *Victum vestitum*, board and lodging and just enough money to buy a new cassock once a year. I had never wished for anything more myself. The modest competence which I now possess only fell to my share later in life, and quite independently of my own volition. I look upon the world at large as belonging to me, but I only spend the interest of my capital. I shall depart this life without having possessed anything save "that which it is usual to consume," according to the Franciscan code. Whenever I have been tempted to buy some small plot of ground, an inward voice has prevented me. To have done so would have seemed to me gross, material, and opposed to the principle: *Non habemus hic manentem civitatem.* Securities are lighter, more ethereal, and more fragile; they do not exercise the same amount of attachment, and there is more risk of losing them.

At the present rate this is a bitter contradiction, and though the rule which I have followed has given me happiness, I would not advise any one to adopt it. I am too old to change now, and besides I have nothing to complain of; but I should be afraid of misleading young people if I told them to do the same. To get the most one can out of oneself is becoming the rule of the world at large. The idea that the nobleman is the man who does not make money, and that any commercial or industrial pursuit, no matter how honest, debases the person engaged in it, and prevents him from belonging to the highest circle of humanity, is fast fading away. So great is the difference which an interval of forty years brings about in human affairs. All that I once did now appears sheer folly, and sometimes in looking around me I fail to recognise that it is the same world.

The man whose life is devoted to immaterial pursuits is a child in worldly affairs; he is helpless without a guardian. The world in which we live is wide enough for every place which is worth taking to be occupied; every post to be held creates, so to speak, the person to fill it. I had never imagined that the product of my thought could have any market value. I had always had an idea of writing, but it had never occurred to me that it would bring me in any money. I was greatly astonished, therefore, when a man of pleasant and intelligent appearance called

upon me in my garret one day, and, after complimenting me upon several articles which I had written, offered to publish them in a collected form. A stamped agreement which he had with him specified terms which seemed to me so wonderfully liberal that when he asked me if all my future writings should be included in the agreement, I gave my assent. I was tempted to make one or two observations, but the sight of the stamp stopped me, and I was unwilling that so fine a piece of paper should be wasted. I did well to forego them, for M. Michel Lévy must have been created by a special decree of Providence to be my editor. A man of letters who has any self-respect should write in only one journal and in one review, and should have only one publisher. M. Michel Lévy and myself always got on very well together. At a subsequent date, he pointed out to me that the agreement which he had prepared was not sufficiently remunerative for me, and he substituted for it one much more to my advantage. I am told that he has not made a bad speculation out of me. I am delighted to hear it. In any event, I may safely say that if I possessed a fund of literary wealth it was only fair that he should have a large share of it, as but for him I should never have suspected its existence.

II. It is very difficult to prove that one is modest, for the very assertion of one's modesty destroys one's claim to it. As I have said, our old Christian teachers

had an excellent rule upon this score, which was never to speak of oneself either in praise or depreciation. This is the true principle, but the general reader will not have it so, and is the cause of all the mischief. He leads the writer to commit faults upon which he is afterwards very hard, just as the staid middle classes of another age applauded the actor, and yet excluded him from the Church. "Incur your own damnation, as long as you amuse us" is often the sentiment which lurks beneath the encouragement, often flattering in appearance, of the public. Success is more often than not acquired by our defects. When I am very well pleased with what I have written, I have perhaps nine or ten persons who approve of what I have said. When I cease to keep a strict watch upon myself, when my literary conscience hesitates, and my hand shakes, thousands are anxious for me to go on.

But notwithstanding all this, and making due allowance for venial faults, I may safely claim that I have been modest, and in this respect, at all events, I have not come short of the St. Sulpice standard. I am not afflicted with literary vanity. I do not fall into the error which distinguishes the literary views of our day. I am well assured that no really great man has ever imagined himself to be one, and that those who during their lifetime browse upon their glory while it is green, do not garner it ripe after their death. I only feigned to set store by literature for a time to

please M. Sainte-Beuve who had great influence over me. Since his death, I have ceased to attach any value to it. I see plainly enough that talent is only prized because people are so childish. If the public were wise, they would be content with getting the truth. What they like is in most cases imperfections. My adversaries, in order to deny me the possession of other qualities which interfere with their apologeticum, are so profuse in their allowance of talent to me that I need not scruple to accept an encomium which, coming from them, is a criticism. In any event, I have never sought to gain anything by the display of this inferior quality, which has been more prejudicial to me as a *savant* than it has been useful of itself. I have not based any calculations upon it. I have never counted upon my supposed talent for a livelihood, and I have not in any way tried to turn it to account. The late M. Beulé, who looked upon me with a kind of good-natured curiosity mingled with astonishment, could not understand why I made so little use of it. I have never been at all a literary man. In the most decisive moments of my life I had not the least idea that my prose would secure any success.

I have never done anything to foster my success, which, if I may be permitted to say so, might have been much greater if I had so willed. I have in no wise followed up my good fortune ; upon the contrary,

I have rather tried to check it. The public likes a writer who sticks closely to his line, and who has his own specialty; placing but little confidence in those who try to shine in contradictory subjects. I could have secured an immense amount of popularity if I had gone in for a *crescendo* of anti-clericalism after the *Vie de Jésus*. The general reader likes a strong style. I could easily have left in the flourishes and tinsel phrases which excite the enthusiasm of those whose taste is not of a very elevated kind, that is to say, of the majority. I spent a year in toning down the style of the *Vie de Jésus*, as I thought that such a subject could not be treated too soberly or too simply. And we know how fond the masses are of declamation. I have never accentuated my opinions in order to gain the ear of my readers. It is no fault of mine if, owing to the bad taste of the day, a slender voice has made itself heard athwart the darkness in which we dwell, as if reverberated by a thousand echoes.

III. With regard to my politeness, I shall find fewer cavillers than with regard to my modesty, for, so far as mere externals go, I have been endowed with much more of the former than of the latter. The extreme urbanity of my old masters made so great an impression upon me that I have never broken away from it. Theirs was the true French politeness; that which is shown not only towards acquaintances but towards all

persons without exception.[1] Politeness of this kind implies a general standard of conduct, without which life cannot, as I hold, go on smoothly ; viz. that every human creature should be given credit for goodness failing proof to the contrary, and treated kindly. Many people, especially in certain countries, follow the opposite rule, and this leads to great injustice. For my own part, I cannot possibly be severe upon any one *à priori.* I take for granted that every person I see for the first time is a man of merit and of good repute, reserving to myself the right to alter my opinions (as I often have to do) if facts compel me to do so. This is the St. Sulpice rule, which, in my contact with the outside world, has placed me in very singular positions, and has often made me appear very old-fashioned, a relic of the past, and unfamiliar with the age in which we live. The right way to behave at table is to help oneself to the worst piece in the dish, so as to avoid the semblance of leaving for others what one does not think good enough—or, better still, to take the piece nearest to one without looking at what is in the dish. Any one who was to act in this delicate way in the struggle of modern life, would sacrifice himself to no purpose. His delicacy would not even be noticed. "First come, first served," is the objectionable rule of modern egotism. To obey, in a

[1] I will add towards animals as well. I could not possibly behave unkindly to a dog, or treat him roughly, and with an air of authority.

world which has ceased to have any heed of civility, the excellent rules of the politeness of other days, would be tantamount to playing the part of a dupe, and no one would thank you for your pains. When one feels oneself being pushed by people who want to get in front of one, the proper thing to do is to draw back with a gesture tantamount to saying: "Do not let me prevent you passing." But it is very certain that any one who adhered to this rule in an omnibus would be the victim of his own deference; in fact, I believe that he would be infringing the bye-laws. In travelling by rail, how few people seem to see that in trying to force their way before others on the platform in order to secure the best seats, they are guilty of gross discourtesy.

In other words, our democratic machines have no place for the man of polite manners. I have long since given up taking the omnibus; the conductor came to look upon me as a passenger who did not know what he was about. In travelling by rail, I invariably have the worst seat, unless I happen to get a helping hand from the station-master. I was fashioned for a society based upon respect, in which people could be treated, classified, and placed according to their costume, and in which they would not have to fight for their own hand. I am only at home at the Institute or the Collège de France, and that because our officials are all well-conducted men and

hold us in great respect. The Eastern habit of always having a *cavass* to walk in front of one in the public thoroughfares suited me very well; for modesty is seasoned by a display of force. It is agreeable to have under one's orders a man armed with a kourbash which one does not allow him to use. I should not at all mind having the power of life and death without ever exercising it, and I should much like to own some slaves in order to be extremely kind to them and to make them adore me.

IV. My clerical ideas have exercised a still greater influence over me in all that relates to the rules of morality. I should have looked upon it as a lack of decorum if I had made any change in my austere habits upon this score. The world at large, in its ignorance of spiritual things, believes that men only abandon the ecclesiastical calling because they find its duties too severe. I should never have forgiven myself if I had done anything to lend even a semblance of reason to views so superficial. With my extreme conscientiousness I was anxious to be at rest with myself, and I continued to live in Paris the life which I had led in the seminary. As time went on, I recognised that this virtue was as vain as all the others; and more especially I noted that nature does not in the least encourage man to be chaste. I none the less persevered in the mode of life I had selected, and I deliberately imposed upon myself the morals

of a Protestant clergyman. A man should never take two liberties with popular prejudice at the same time. The freethinker should be very particular as to his morals. I know some Protestant ministers, very broad in their ideas, whose stiff white ties preserve them from all reproach. In the same way I have, thanks to a moderate style and blameless morals, secured a hearing for ideas which, in the eyes of human mediocrity, are advanced.

The worldly views in regard to the relations between the sexes are as peculiar as the biddings of nature itself. The world, whose judgments are rarely altogether wrong, regards it as more or less ridiculous to be virtuous, when one is not obliged to be so as a matter of professional duty. The priest, whose place it is to be chaste as it is that of the soldier to be brave, is, according to this view, almost the only person who can, without incurring ridicule, stand by principles over which morality and fashion are so often at variance. There can be no doubt that, upon this point, as on many others, adherence to my clerical principles has been injurious to me in the eyes of the world. These principles have not affected my happiness. Women have, as a rule, understood how much respect and sympathy for them my affectionate reserve implied. In fine, I have been beloved by the four women whose love was of the most comfort to me: My mother, my sister, my wife and my daughter. I

have had the better part, and it will not be taken from me, for I often fancy that the judgments which will be passed upon us in the valley of Jehosophat, will be neither more nor less than those of women, countersigned by the Almighty.

Thus it may, upon the whole, be said that I have come short in little of my clerical promises. I have exchanged spirituality for ideality. I have been truer to my engagements than many priests apparently more regular in their conduct. In resolutely clinging to the virtues of disinterestedness, politeness, and modesty in a world to which they are not applicable I have shown how very simple I am. I have never courted success ; I may almost say that it is distasteful to me. The pleasure of living and of working is quite enough for me. Whatever may be egotistical in this way of engaging the pleasure of existence is neutralized by the sacrifices which I believe that I have made for the public good. I have always been at the orders of my country ; at the first sign from it, in 1869, I placed myself at its disposal. I might perhaps have rendered it some service ; the country did not think so, but I have done my part. I have never flattered the errors of public opinion ; and I have been so careful not to lose a single opportunity of pointing out these errors, that superficial persons have regarded me as wanting in patriotism. One is not called upon to descend to charlatanism or false-

hood to obtain a mandate, the main condition of which is independence and sincerity. Amidst the public misfortunes which may be in store for us, my conscience will, therefore, be quite at rest.

All things considered, I should not, if I had to begin my life over again, with the right of making what erasures I liked, change anything. The defects of my nature and education have, by a sort of benevolent Providence, been so attenuated and reduced as to be of very little moment. A certain apparent lack of frankness in my relations with them is forgiven me by my friends, who attribute it to my clerical education. I must admit that in the early part of my life I often told untruths, not in my own interest, but out of good-nature and indifference, upon the mistaken idea which always induces me to take the view of the person with whom I may be conversing. My sister depicted to me in very vivid colours the drawbacks involved in acting like this, and I have given up doing so. I am not aware of having told a single untruth since 1851, with the exception, of course, of the harmless stories and polite fibs which all casuists permit, as also the literary evasions which, in the interests of a higher truth, must be used to make up a well-poised phrase, or to avoid a still greater misfortune—that of stabbing an author. Thus, for instance, a poet brings you some verses. You must say that they are admirable, for if you said less it

would be tantamount to describing them as worthless, and to inflicting a grievous insult upon a man who intended to show you a polite attention.

My friends may have well found it much more difficult to forgive me another defect, which consists in being rather slow not to show them affection but to render them assistance. One of the injunctions most impressed upon us at the seminary was to avoid "special friendships." Friendships of this kind were described as being a fraud upon the rest of the community. This rule has always remained indelibly impressed upon my mind. I have never given much encouragement to friendship; I have done little for my friends, and they have done little for me. One of the ideas which I have so often to cope with is that friendship, as it is generally understood, is an injustice and a blunder, which only allows you to distinguish the good qualities of a single person, and blinds you to those of others who are perhaps more deserving of your sympathy. I fancy to myself at times, like my ancient masters, that friendship is a larceny committed at the expense of society at large, and that, in a more elevated world, friendship would disappear. In some cases, it has seemed to me that the special attachment which unites two individuals is a slight upon good-fellowship generally; and I am always tempted to hold aloof from them as being warped in their judgment and devoid of impartiality and liberty. A close

association of this kind between two persons must, in my view, narrow the mind, detract from anything like breadth of view, and fetter the independence. Beulé often used to banter me upon this score. He was somewhat attached to me, and was anxious to render me a service, though I had not done the equivalent for him. Upon a certain occasion I voted against him in favour of some one who had been very ill-natured towards me, and he said to me afterwards: "Renan, I shall play some mean trick upon you; out of impartiality you will vote for me."

While I have been very fond of my friends, I have done very little for them. I have been as much at the disposal of the public as of them. This is why I receive so many letters from unknown and anonymous correspondents; and this is also why I am such a bad correspondent. It has often happened to me while writing a letter to break off suddenly and convert into general terms the ideas which have occurred to me. The best of my life has been lived for the public, which has had all I have to give. There is no surprise in store for it after my death, as I have kept nothing back for anybody.

Having thus given my preference instinctively to the many rather than to the few, I have enjoyed the sympathy even of my adversaries, but I have had few friends. No sooner has there been any sign of warmth in my feelings, than the St. Sulpice dictum,

"No special friendships," has acted as a refrigerator, and stood in the way of any close affinity. My craving to be just has prevented me from being obliging. I am too much impressed by the idea that in doing one person a service you as a rule disoblige another person; that to further the chances of one competitor is very often equivalent to an injury upon another. Thus the image of the unknown person whom I am about to injure brings my zeal to a sudden check. I have obliged hardly any one; I have never learnt how people succeed in obtaining the management of a tobacco shop for those in whom they are interested. This has caused me to be devoid of influence in the world, but from a literary point of view it has been a good thing for me. Mérimée would have been a man of the very highest mark if he had not had so many friends. But his friends took complete possession of him. How can a man write private letters when it is in his power to address himself to all the world. The person to whom you write reduces your talent; you are obliged to write down to his level. The public has a broader intelligence than any one person. There are a great many fools, it is true, among the "all," but the "all" comprises as well the few thousand clever men and women for whom alone the world may be said to exist. It is in view of them that one should write.

FIRST STEPS OUTSIDE ST SULPICE

PART V.

I NOW bring to a conclusion these *Recollections* by asking the reader to forgive the irritating fault into which writing of this kind leads one in every sentence. Vanity is so deep in its secret calculations that even when frankly criticising himself the writer is liable to the suspicion of not being quite open and above board. The danger in such a case is that he will, with unconscious artfulness, humbly confess, as he can do without much merit, to trifling and external defects so as indirectly to ascribe to himself very high qualities. The demon of vanity is, assuredly, a very subtle one, and I ask myself whether perchance I have fallen a victim to it. If men of taste reproach me with having shown myself to be a true representative of the age while pretending not to be so, I beg them to rest well assured that this will not happen to me again.

Claudite jam rivos, pueri ; sat prata biberunt.

I have too much work before me to amuse myself in a way which many people will stigmatise as

frivolous. My mother's family at Lannion, from which I have inherited my disposition, has supplied several cases of longevity; but certain recurrent symptoms lead me to believe that so far as I am concerned I shall not furnish another. I shall thank God that it is so, if I am thus spared years of decadence and loss of power, which are the only things I dread. At all events, the remainder of my life will be devoted to a research of the pure objective truth. Should these be the last lines in which I am given an opportunity of addressing myself to the public, I may be allowed to thank them for the intelligent and sympathetic way in which they have supported me. In former times the most that a man who went out of the beaten track could expect was that he would be tolerated. My age and country have been much more indulgent for me. Despite his many defects and his humble origin, the son of peasants and of lowly sailors, trebly ridiculous as a deserter from the seminary, an unfrocked clerk and a case-hardened pedant, was from the first well-received, listened to, and ever made much of, simply because he spoke with sincerity. I have had some ardent opponents, but I have never had a personal enemy. The only two objects of my ambition, admission to the Institute and to the Collège de France, have been gratified. France has allowed me to share the favours which she reserves for all

that is liberal: her admirable language, her glorious literary tradition, her rules of tact, and the audience which she can command. Foreigners, too, have aided me in my task as much as my own country, and I shall carry to my grave a feeling of affection for Europe as well as for France, to whom I would at times go on my knees and entreat not to divide her own household by fratricidal jealousy, nor to forget her duty and her common task, which is civilization.

Nearly all the men with whom I have had anything to do have been extremely kind to me. When I first left the seminary, I traversed, as I have said, a period of solitude, during which my sole support consisted of my sister's letters and my conversations with M. Berthelot; but I soon met with encouragement in every direction. M. Egger became, from the beginning of 1846, my friend and my guide in the difficult task of proving, rather late in the day, what I could do in the way of classics. Eugène Burnouf, after perusing a very defective essay which I wrote for the Volney Prize in 1847, chose me as a pupil. M. and Mme. Adolphe Garnier were extremely kind to me. They were a charming couple, and Madame Garnier, radiant with grace and devoid of affectation, first inspired me with admiration for a kind of beauty from which theology had sequestered me. With M. Victor Le Clerc I had brought before my eyes all those qualities of study and methodical application

which distinguished my former teachers. I had learnt to like him from the time of my residence at St. Sulpice: he was the only layman whom the directors of the seminary valued, and they envied him his remarkable ecclesiastical erudition. M. Cousin, though he more than once displayed friendliness for me, was too closely surrounded by disciples for me to try and force my way through such a crowd, which was somewhat subservient to their master's utterances. M. Augustin Thierry, upon the other hand, was, in the true sense of the word, a spiritual father for me. His advice is ever in my thoughts, and I have him to thank for having kept clear in my style of writing from certain very ungainly defects which I should not have discovered for myself. It was through him that I made the acquaintance of the Scheffer family, whom I have to thank for a companion who has always assorted herself so harmoniously to my somewhat contracted conditions of life that I am at times tempted, when I reflect upon so many fortunate coincidences, to believe in predestination.

According to my philosophy, which regards the world in its entirety as full of a divine afflation, there is no place for individual will in the government of the universe. Individual Providence, in the sense formerly attached to it, has never been proved by any unmistakable fact. But for this, I should assuredly be thankful to yield to a combination of circumstances

in which a mind, less subjugated than my own by general reasoning, would detect the traces of the special protection of benevolent deities. The play of chances which brings up a ternion or a quaternion is nothing compared to what has been required to prevent the combination of which I am reaping the fruits from being disturbed. If my origin had been less lowly in the eyes of the world, I should not have entered or persevered upon that royal road of the intellectual life to which my early training for the priesthood attached me. The displacement of a single atom would have broken the chain of fortuitous facts which, in the remote district of Brittany, was preparing me for a privileged life; which brought me from Brittany to Paris; which, when I was in Paris, took me to the establishment of all others where the best and most solid education was to be had; which, when I left the seminary, saved me from two or three mistakes which would have been the ruin of me; which, when I was on my travels, extricated me from certain dangers that, according to the doctrine of chances, would have been fatal to me; which, to cite one special instance, brought Dr. Suquet over from America to rescue me from the jaws of death which were yawning to swallow me up. The only conclusion I would fain draw from all this is that the unconscious effort towards what is good and true in the universe has its throw of the dice through

the intermediary of each one of us. There is no combination but what comes up, quaternions like any other. We may disarrange the designs of Providence in respect to ourselves; but we have next to no influence upon their accomplishment. *Quid habes quod non accepisti?* The dogma of grace is the truest of all the Christian dogmas.

My experience of life has, therefore, been very pleasant; and I do not think that there are many human beings happier than I am. I have a keen liking for the universe. There may have been moments when subjective scepticism has gained a hold upon me, but it never made me seriously doubt of the reality, and the objections which it has evoked are sequestered by me as it were within an inclosure of forgetfulness; I never give them any thought, my peace of mind is undisturbed. Then, again, I have found a fund of goodness in nature and in society. Thanks to the remarkable good luck which has attended me all my life, and always thrown me into communication with very worthy men, I have never had to make sudden changes in my attitudes. Thanks, also, to an almost unchangeable good temper, the result of moral healthiness, which is itself the result of a well-balanced mind, and of tolerably good bodily health, I have been able to indulge in a quiet philosophy, which finds expression either in grateful optimism or playful irony. I have never gone through

much suffering. I might even be tempted to think that nature has more than once thrown down cushions to break the fall for me. Upon one occasion, when my sister died, nature literally put me under chloroform, to save me a sight which would perhaps have created a severe lesion in my feelings, and have permanently affected the serenity of my thought.

Thus, I have to thank some one; I do not exactly know whom. I have had so much pleasure out of life that I am really not justified in claiming a compensation beyond the grave. I have other reasons for being irritated at death: he is levelling to a degree which annoys me; he is a democrat, who attacks us with dynamite; he ought, at all events, to await our convenience and be at our call. I receive many times in the course of the year an anonymous letter, containing the following words, always in the same handwriting: "If there should be such a place as hell after all?" No doubt the pious person who writes to me is anxious for the salvation of my soul, and I am deeply thankful for the same. But hell is a hypothesis very far from being in conformity with what we know from other sources of the divine mercy. Moreover, I can lay my hand on my heart and say that if there is such a place I do not think that I have done anything which would consign me to it. A short stay in purgatory would, perhaps, be just; I would take the chance of this, as there would be Paradise afterwards,

and there would be plenty of charitable persons to secure indulgences, by which my sojourn would be shortened. The infinite goodness which I have experienced in this world inspires me with the conviction that eternity is pervaded by a goodness not less infinite, in which I repose unlimited trust.

All that I have now to ask of the good genius which has so often guided, advised, and consoled me is a calm and sudden death at my appointed hour, be it near or distant. The Stoics maintained that one might have led a happy life in the belly of the bull of Phalaris. This is going too far. Suffering degrades, humiliates, and leads to blasphemy. The only acceptable death is the noble death, which is not a pathological accident, but a premeditated and precious end before the Everlasting. Death upon the battle-field is the grandest of all; but there are others which are illustrious. If at times I may have conceived the wish to be a senator, it is because I fancy that this function will, within some not distant interval, afford fine opportunities of being knocked on the head or shot—forms of death which are very preferable to a long illness, which kills you by inches and demolishes you bit by bit. God's will be done! I have little chance of adding much to my store of knowledge; I have a pretty accurate idea of the amount of truth which the human mind can, in the present stage of its development, discern. I

should be very grieved to have to go through one of those periods of enfeeblement during which the man once endowed with strength and virtue is but the shadow and ruin of his former self; and often, to the delight of the ignorant, sets himself to demolish the life which he had so laboriously constructed. Such an old age is the worst gift which the gods can give to man. If such a fate be in store for me, I hasten to protest beforehand against the weaknesses which a softened brain might lead me to say or sign. It is the Renan, sane in body and in mind, as I am now—not the Renan half destroyed by death and no longer himself, as I shall be if my decomposition is gradual—whom I wish to be believed and listened to. I disavow the blasphemies to which in my last hour I might give way against the Almighty. The existence which was given me without my having asked for it has been a beneficent one for me. Were it offered to me, I would gladly accept it over again. The age in which I have lived will not probably count as the greatest, but it will doubtless be regarded as the most amusing. Unless my closing years have some very cruel trials in store, I shall have, in bidding farewell to life, to thank the cause of all good for the delightful excursion through reality which I have been enabled to make.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

THIS volume was already in the press, when Abbé Cognat published in the *Correspondant* (January 25th, 1883) the letters which I wrote to him in 1845 and 1846.[1] As several of my friends told me that they had found them very interesting, I reproduce them here just as they were published.

TRÉGUIER, *August 14th*, 1845.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Few events of importance have occurred, but many thoughts and feelings have crowded in upon me since the day we parted. I am all the more glad to impart them to you because there is no one else to whom I can confide them. I am not alone, it is true, when I am with my mother; but there are many things that my tender regard for her compels me to keep back, and which, for the matter of that, she would not understand.

Nothing has occurred to advance the solution of the important problem of which, as is only natural, my mind is full. I have learnt nothing more, unless it be the immensity of the sacrifice which God required of me. A thousand

[1] See above, page 262.

painful details which I had never thought of have cropped up, with the effect of complicating the situation, and of showing me that the course dictated me by my conscience opened up a future of endless trouble. I should have to enter into long and painful details to make you understand exactly what I mean; and it must suffice if I tell you that the obstacles of which we have on various occasions spoken are as nothing by comparison with those which have suddenly started up before me. It was no small thing to brave an opinion which would, one knew, be very hard upon one, and to live on for long years an arduous life leading to one knew not what; but the sacrifice was not then consummated. God enjoins me to pierce with my own hand a heart upon which all the affection there is in my own has been poured out. Filial love had absorbed in me all the other affections of which I was capable, and which God did not bring into play within me. Moreover, there existed between my mother and myself many ties arising from a thousand impalpable details which can be better felt than described. This was the most painful part of the sacrifice which God required of me. I have hitherto only spoken to her about Germany, and that is enough to make her very unhappy. I tremble to think of what will happen when she knows all. Her tender caresses go to my very heart, as do her plans for my future, of which she is ever talking to me, and in which I have not the courage to disappoint her. She is standing close to me as I write this to you. Did she but know! I would sacrifice everything to her except my duty and my conscience. Yes, if God exacted of me, in order to spare her this pain, that I should extinguish my thought and condemn myself to a plodding, vulgar existence, I would submit. Many a time I have endeavoured to deceive

myself, but it is not in human power to believe or not to believe at will. I wish that I could stifle within me the faculty of self-examination, for it is this which has caused all my unhappiness. Fortunate are the children who all their life long do but sleep and dream! I see around me men of pure and simple lives whom Christianity has had the power to make virtuous and happy. But I have noticed that none of them have the critical faculty; for which let them bless God!

I cannot tell you to what an extent I am spoilt and made much of here, and it is this which grieves me so. Did they but know what is passing in my heart! I am fearful at times lest my conduct may be hypocritical, but I have satisfied my conscience in this respect. God forbid that I should be a cause of scandal to these simple souls!

When I see in what an inextricable net God has involved me while I was asleep, I am unable to resist fatalistic thoughts, and I may often have sinned in that respect; yet I never have doubted my Father which is in Heaven or His goodness. Upon the contrary, I have always given Him thanks, and have never felt myself nearer to Him than at moments like those. The heart learns only by suffering, and I believe with Kant that God is only to be known through the heart. Then too I was a Christian, and resolved ever to remain one. But can orthodoxy be critical? Had I but been born a German Protestant, for then I should have been in my proper place! Herder ended his days a bishop, and he was only just a Christian; but in the Catholic religion you must be orthodox. Catholicism is a bar of iron, and will not admit anything like reasoning.

Forgive me, my dear friend, the wish which I have just expressed and which does not even come from that part in

me which still believes without knowing. You must, in order to be orthodox, believe that I am reduced to my present condition by my own fault; and that is very hard. Nevertheless, I am quite disposed to think that it is to a great extent my own fault. He who knows his own heart will always answer, "Yes," when he is told, "It is your own fault." Nothing of all that has happened to me is easier for me to admit than that. I will not be as obstinate as Job with regard to my own innocence. However pure of offence I might believe myself to be, I would only pray God to have pity on me. The perusal of the Book of Job delights me; for in this Book is to be found poetry in its most divine form. The Book of Job renders palpable the mysteries which one feels within one's own heart, and to which one has been painfully endeavouring to give tangible shape.

None the less do I resolutely continue to follow out my thoughts. Nothing will induce me to abandon this, even if I should be compelled to appear to sacrifice it to the earning of my daily bread. God had, in order to sustain me in my resolve, reserved for this critical moment an event of real significance from the intellectual and moral standpoint. I have studied Germany, and it has seemed to me that I have been entering some holy place. All that I have lighted upon in the course of the study is pure, elevating, moral, beautiful, and touching. Oh! My Soul! Yes, it is a real treasure, and the continuation of Jesus Christ. Their moral qualities excite my liveliest admiration. How strong and gentle they are! I believe that it is in this direction that we must look for the advent of Christ. I regard this apparition of a new spirit as analogous to the birth of Christianity, except as to the difference of form. But this is of little importance, for it is certain that when the event which is to renovate the world

shall recur, it will not in the mode of its accomplishment resemble that which has already occurred. I am attentively following the wave of enthusiasm which is at this moment spreading over the north. M. Cousin has just started to study its progress for himself, I am referring to Ronge and Czerski, whose names you must have heard mentioned. May God pardon me for liking them, even if they should not be pure: for what I like in them, as in all others who have evoked my enthusiasm, is a certain standard of attractiveness and morality which I have assigned them; in short, I admire in them my ideal. It may be asked whether or not they come up to this standard. That to my mind is quite a secondary matter.

Yes, Germany delights me, not so much in her scientific as in her moral aspect. The *morale* of Kant is far superior to all his logic and intellectual philosophy, and our French writers have never alluded to it. This is only natural, for the men of our day have no moral sense. France seems to me every day more devoid of any part in the great work of renovating the life of humanity. A dry, anti-critical, barren, and petty orthodoxy, of the St. Sulpice type; a hollow and superficial imitation full of affectation and exaggeration, like Neo-Catholicism; and an arid and heartless philosophy, crabbed and disdainful, like the University, make up the sum of French culture. Jesus Christ is nowhere to be found. I have been inclined to think that He would come to us from Germany; not that I suppose He would be an individual, but a spirit. And when we use the word Jesus Christ we mean, no doubt, a certain spirit rather than an individual, and that is the Gospel. Not that I believe that this apparition is likely to bring about either an upset or a discovery; Jesus Christ neither overturned nor discovered

anything. One must be Christian, but it is impossible to be orthodox. What is needed is a pure Christianity. The archbishop will be inclined to believe this; he is capable of founding pure Christianity in France. I apprehend that one result of the tendency among the French clergy to study and gain instruction will be to rationalise us a little. In the first place they will get tired of scholasticism, and when that has been got rid of there will be a change in the form of ideas, and it will be seen that the orthodox interpretation of the Bible does not hold water. But this will not be effected without a struggle, for your orthodox people are very tenacious in their dogmatism, and they will apply to themselves a certain quantity of Athanasian varnish which will close their eyes and ears. Yes, I should much like to be there! And I am about, it may be, to cut off my arms, for the priests will be all powerful yet a while, and it may well be that there will be nothing to be done without being a priest, as Ronge and Czerski were. I have read a letter to Czerski from his mother, in which she reminds him of the sacrifices she had made for his clerical education and entreats him to remain staunch to Catholicism. But how can he serve it more sincerely than by devoting himself to what he believes to be the truth?

Forgive me, my dear friend, for what I have just said to you. If you only knew the state of my head and my heart! Do not imagine that all this has assumed a dogmatic consistency within me; so far from that, I am the reverse of exclusive. I am willing to admit counter-evidence, at all events for the time. Is it not possible to conceive a state of things during which the individual and humanity are perforce exposed to instability? You may answer that this is an untenable position for them. Yes, but how can it be

helped? It was necessary at one period that people should be sceptical from a scientific point of view as to morality, and yet, at this same period, men of pure minds could be and were moral, at the risk of being inconsistent. The disciples of scholasticism would mock at this, and triumphantly point to it as a blunder in logic. It is easy to prove what is patent to every one. Their idea is a moral state in which every detail has its set formula, and they care little about the substance as long as the outward form is perfect. They know neither man nor humanity as they really exist.

Yes, my dear friend, I still believe; I pray and recite the Lord's Prayer with ecstasy. I am very fond of being in church, where the pure and simple piety moves me deeply in the lucid moments when I inhale the odour of God. I even have devotional fits, and I believe that they will last, for piety is of value even when it is merely psychological. It has a moralising effect upon us, and raises us above wretched utilitarian preoccupations; for where ends utilitarianism there begins the beautiful, the infinite, and Almighty God; and the pure air wafted thence is life itself.

I am taken here for a good little seminarist, very pious and tractable. This is not my fault, but it grieves me now and again, for I am so afraid of appearing not to be straightforward. Yet I do not feign anything, God knows; I merely do not say all I feel. Should I do better to enter upon these wretched controversies, in which they would have the advantage of being the champions of the beautiful and the pure, and in which I should have the appearance of assimilating myself to all that is most vile? for anti-Christianity has in this country so low, detestable, and revolting an aspect that I am repelled from it if only by natural modesty. And then they know nothing whatever about the

matter. I cannot be blamed for not speaking to them in German. Moreover, as I have already explained to you, I am so situated intellectually that I can appear one thing to this person and another to that one without any feigning on my part, and without either of them being deceived, thanks to having for a time shaken off the yoke of contradiction.

And then I must tell you that at times I have been within an ace of a complete reaction, and have wondered whether it would not be more agreeable to God if I were to cut short the thread of my self-examination and trace my steps back two or three years. The fact is that I do not see as I advance further any chance of reaching Catholicism; each step leads me further away from it. However this may be, the alternative is a very clear one. I can only return to Catholicism by the amputation of one of my faculties, by definitely stigmatising my reason and condemning it to perpetual silence. Yes, if I returned, I should cease my life of study and self-examination, persuaded that it could only bring me to evil, and I should lead a purely mystic life in the Catholic sense. For I trust that so far as regards a mere commonplace life God will always deliver me from that. Catholicism meets the requirements of all my faculties excepting my critical one, and as I have no reason to hope that matters will mend in this respect I must either abandon Catholicism or amputate this faculty. This operation is a difficult and a painful one, but you may be sure that if my moral conscience did not stand in the way, that if God came to me this evening and told me that it would be pleasing to Him, I should do it. You would not recognise me in my new character, for I should cease to study or to indulge in critical thought, and should become

a thorough mystic. You may also be sure that I must have been violently shaken to so much as consider the possibility of such a hypothesis, which forces itself upon me with greater terrors than death itself. But yet I should not despair of striking, even in this career, a vein of activity which would suffice to keep me going.

And what, all said and done, will be my decision? It is with indescribable dread that I see the close of the vacation drawing near, for I shall then have to express, by very decisive action, a very undecided inward state. It is this complication which makes my position peculiarly painful. So much anxiety unnerves me, and then I feel so plainly that I do not understand matters of this kind, that I shall be certain to make some foolish blunder, and that I shall become a laughing-stock. I was not born a cunning knave. They will laugh at my simple-mindedness, and will look upon me as a fool. If, with all this, I was only sure of what I was doing! But then, again, supposing that by contact with them I were to lose my purity of heart and my conception of life! Supposing they were to inoculate me with their positivism! And even if I were sure of myself, could I be sure of the external circumstances which have so fatal an action upon us? And who, knowing himself, can be sure that he will be proof against his own weakness? Is it not indeed the case that God has done me but a poor service? It seems as if He had employed all His strategy for surrounding me in every direction, and a simple young fellow like myself might have been ensnared with much less trouble. But for all this I love Him, and am persuaded that He has done all for my good, much as facts may seem to contradict it. We must take an optimist view for individuals as well as for humanity, despite the perpetual

evidence of facts telling the other way. This is what constitutes true courage; I am the only person who can injure myself.

I often think of you, my dear friend; you should be very happy. A bright and assured future is opening before you; you have the goal in view, and all you have to do is to march steadily onward to it. You enjoy the marked advantage of having a strictly defined dogma to go by. You will retain your breadth of view; and I trust that you may never discover that there is a grievous incompatibility between the wants of your heart and of your mind. In that case you would have to make a very painful choice. Whatever conclusion you may perforce arrive at as to my present condition and the innocence of my mind, let me at all events retain your friendship. Do not allow my errors, or even my faults, to destroy it. Besides, as I have said, I count upon your breadth of view, and I will not do anything to demonstrate that it is not orthodox, for I am anxious that you should adhere to it; and at the same time I wish you to be orthodox. You are almost the only person to whom I have confided my inmost thoughts; in Heaven's name be indulgent and continue to call me your brother! My affection, dear friend, will never fail you.

PARIS, *November 12th*, 1845.

I was somewhat surprised, my dear friend, not to get a reply from you before the close of the vacation. The first inquiry, therefore, which I made at St. Sulpice was for you; first in order to learn the cause of your silence, and especially in order that I might have some talk with you. I need not tell you how grieved I was when I learnt that it was owing to a serious illness that I had not heard from you. It is true

that the further details which were given me sufficed to allay my anxiety, but they did not diminish the regret which I felt at finding the chance of a conversation with you indefinitely postponed. This unexpected piece of news, coinciding with so strange a phase in my own life, inspired me with many reflections. You will hardly believe, perhaps, that I envied your lot, and that I longed for something to happen which would defer my embarking upon the stormy sea of busy life and prolong the repose which accompanies home life, so quiet and so free of care. You will understand this when I have explained to you all the trials which I have had to undergo and which are still in store for me. I will not attempt to explain them to you in detail, but will keep them over until we meet. I will merely relate the principal facts, and those which have led to a lasting result.

My firm resolution upon coming to St. Sulpice was to break with a past which had ceased to be in harmony with my present dispositions, and to be quit of appearances which could only mislead. But I was anxious to proceed very deliberately, especially as I felt that a reaction within a more or less considerable interval was by no means improbable. An accidental circumstance had the effect of bringing the crisis to a head quicker than I had intended. Upon my arrival at St. Sulpice, I was informed that I was no longer to be attached to the Seminary, but to the Carmelite establishment, which the Archbishop of Paris had just founded, and I was ordered to go and report myself to him the same day. You can fancy how embarrassed I felt. My embarrassment was still further increased upon learning that the Archbishop had just arrived at the Seminary, and wished to speak to me. To accept would be immoral; it was impossible for me to give the real reason for my refusal,

and I could not bring myself to give a false one. I had recourse to the services of worthy M. Carbon, who undertook to tell my story, and so spared me this painful interview. I thought it best to go right through with the matter when once it had been begun, and I completed in one day what I had intended to spread over several weeks, so that on the evening of my return I belonged neither to the Seminary nor to the Carmelite house.

I was terrified at seeing so many ties destroyed in a few hours, and I should have been glad to arrest this fatal progress, all too rapid as I thought; but I was perforce driven forward, and there were no means of holding back. The days which followed were the darkest of my life. I was isolated from the whole world, without a friend, an adviser or an acquaintance, without any one to appeal to about me, and this after having just left my mother, my native Brittany, and a life gilded with so many pure and simple affections. Here I am alone in the world, and a stranger to it. Good-bye for ever to my mother, my little room, my books, my peaceful studies, and my walks by my mother's side. Good-bye to the pure and tranquil joys which seemed to bring me so near to God; good-bye to my pleasant past, good-bye to those faiths which so gently cradled me. Farewell for me to pure happiness. The past all blotted out, and as yet no future. And then, I ask myself, will the new world for which I have embarked receive me? I have left one in which I was loved and made much of. And my mother, to think of whom was formerly sufficient to solace me in my troubles, was now the cause of my most poignant grief. I was, as it were, stabbing her with a knife. O God! was it then necessary that the path of duty should be so stony? I shall be derided by public opinion, and with all that the

future unfolded itself before me pale and colourless. Ambition was powerless to remove the veil of sadness and regrets which infolded my heart. I cursed the fate which had enveloped me in such fatal contradictions. Moreover, the gross and pressing requirements of material existence had to be faced. I envied the fate of the simple souls who are born, who live and who die without stir or thought, merely following the current as it takes them, worshipping a God whom they call their Father. How I detested my reason for having bereft me of my dreams. I passed some time each evening in the church of St. Sulpice, and there I did my best to believe, but it was of no use. Yes, these days will indeed count in my lifetime, for if they were not the most decisive, they were assuredly the most painful. It was a hard thing to re-commence life from the beginning, at the age of three and twenty. I could scarcely realise the possibility of my having to fight my way through the motley crowd of turbulent and ambitious persons. Timid as I am, I was ever tempted to select a plain and common-place career, which I might have ennobled inwardly. I had lost the desire to know, to scrutinise and to criticise; it seemed to me as if it was enough to love and to feel; but yet I quite feel that as soon as ever the heart throbbed more slowly, the head would once more cry out for food.

I was compelled, however, to create a fresh existence for myself in this world so little adapted for me. I need not trouble you with an account of these complications, which would be as uninteresting to you as they were painful to myself. You may picture me spending whole days in going from one person to another. I was ashamed of myself, but necessity knows no law. Man does not live by bread alone;

but he cannot live without bread. But through it all I never ceased to keep my eyes fixed heavenwards.

I will merely tell you that in compliance with the advice of M. Carbon, and for another peremptory reason of which I will speak to you later on, I thought it best to refuse several rather tempting proposals, and to accept in the preparatory school annexed to the Stanislas College, a humble post which in several respects harmonised very well with my present position. This situation did not take up more than an hour and a half of my time each day, and I had the advantage of making use of special courses of mathematics, physics, etc., to say nothing of preparatory lectures for the M.A. degree, one of which was delivered twice a week, by M. Lenormant. I was agreeably surprised at finding so much frank and cordial geniality among these young people ; and I can safely say that I never had anything approaching to a misunderstanding while there, and that I left the school with sincere regret. But the most remarkable incident in this period of my life were beyond all doubt my relations with M. Gratry, the director of the college. I shall have much to tell you about him, and I am delighted at having made his acquaintance. He is the very miniature of M. Bautain, of whom he is the pupil and friend. We became very friendly from the first, and from that time forward we stood upon a footing towards one another which has never had its like before, so far as I am concerned. In many matters our ideas harmonised wonderfully ; he, like myself, is governed wholly by philosophy. He is, upon the whole, a man of remarkably speculative mind ; but upon certain points there is a hollow ring about him. How came it then, you will ask, that I was obliged to throw up a post which, taking it altogether, suited me fairly well, and in

which I could so easily pursue my present plans? This, I must tell you, is one of the most curious incidents in my life; I should find it almost impossible to make any one understand it, and I do not believe that any one ever has thoroughly understood it. It was once more a question of duty. Yes, the same reason which compelled me to leave St. Sulpice and to refuse the Carmelite establishment obliged me to leave the Stanislas College. M. Dupanloup and M. Manier impelled me onward; onward I went, and I had to start afresh. It seems as if I were fated ever to encounter strange adventures, and I should be very glad that I had met with this particular one, if for no other reason for the peculiar positions in which it placed me, and which were the means of my making a considerable addition to my store of knowledge.

I had no difficulty, upon leaving the Stanislas College, in taking up one of the negotiations which I had broken off when I joined it, and in carrying out my original plan of hiring a student's lodging in Paris. This is my present position. I have hired a room in a sort of school near the Luxemburg, and in exchange for a few lessons in mathematics and literature I am, as the saying goes, "about quits." I did not expect to do so well. I have, moreover, nearly the whole of the day to myself, and I can spend as much time as I please at the Sorbonne, and in the libraries. These are my real homes, and it is in them that I spend my happiest hours. This mode of life would be very pleasant if I was not haunted by painful recollections, apprehensions only too well founded, and above all by a terrible feeling of isolation. Come and join me, therefore, my dear friend, and we shall pass some very pleasant hours together.

I have spoken to you thus far of the facts which have

contributed to detain me for the present in Paris, and I have said nothing to you about the ulterior plans which I have in my head; for you take for granted, I suppose, that I merely look upon this as a transitory situation, pending the completion of my studies. It is upon the more remote future, in fact, that my thoughts are concentrated, now that my present position is assured. From this arises a fresh source of intellectual worry, by which I am at present beset, for it is quite painful to me to have to specialize myself, and besides there is no specialty which fits exactly into the divisions of my mind. But nevertheless it must be done. It is very hard to be fettered in one's intellectual development by external circumstances. You can imagine what I suffer, after having left my mind so absolutely free to follow its line of development. My first step was to see what could be done with regard to Oriental languages, and I was promised some lectures with M. Quatremère and M. Julien, professor of Chinese at the Collège de France. The result went to prove that this was not my outward specialty. (I say outward because internally I shall never have one, unless philosophy be classed as one, which to my mind would be inaccurate.) Then I thought of the university, and here, as you will understand, fresh difficulties arose. A professorship in the strict sense of the term is almost intolerable in my eyes, and even if one does not retain it all one's life long it must be held for a considerable period. I could get on very well with philosophy if I were allowed to teach it in my own way, but I should not be able to do that, and before reaching that stage one would have to spend years at what I call school literature, Latin verses, themes, etc. The perspective seemed so dreadful that I had at one time resolved to attach myself to the science classes, but in that case I should have

been compelled to specialize myself more than in any other branch, for in scientific literature the principle of a species of universality is admitted. And besides, that would divert me from my cherished ideas. No; I will draw as close as possible to the centre which is philosophy, theology, science, literature, etc., which is, as I believe, God. I think it probable, therefore, that I shall fix my attention upon literature, in order that I may graduate in philosophy. All this, as you may fancy, is very colourless in my view, and the bent of the university spirit is the reverse of sympathetic to me. But one must be something, and I have had to try and be that which differs the least from my ideal type. And besides, who can tell if I may not some day succeed thereby in bringing my ideas to light? So many unexpected things happen which upset all calculations. One must be prepared, therefore, for every eventuality, and be ready to unfurl one's sail at the first capful of wind.

I must tell you also of an intellectual matter which has helped to sustain and comfort me in these trying moments: I refer to my relations with M. Dupanloup. I began by writing him a letter describing my inward state and the steps which I deemed it necessary to take in consequence. He quite appreciated my course, and we afterwards had a conversation of an hour and a half in the course of which I laid bare, for the first time to one of my fellow-men my inmost ideas and my doubts with regard to the Catholic faith. I confess that I never met one more gifted; for he was possessed of true philosophy and of a really superior intelligence. It was only then that I learnt thoroughly to know him. We did not go thoroughly into the question. I merely explained the nature of my doubts, and he informed me of the judgment which from the orthodox point of view he

would feel it his duty to pass upon them. He was very severe and plainly told me,[1] "that it was not a question of *temptations* against the faith—a term which I had employed in my letter by force of the habit I had acquired of following the terminology adopted at St. Sulpice, but of a complete loss of faith: secondly, that I was beyond the pale of the Church; thirdly, that in consequence I could not partake of any sacrament, and that he advised me not to take part in any outward religious ceremony; fourthly, that I could not without being guilty of deception, continue another day to pass as an ecclesiastic, and so forth. In all that did not relate to the appreciation of my condition, he was as kind as any one possibly could be. The priests of St. Sulpice and M. Gratry were not nearly so emphatic in their views and held that I must still regard myself as tempted. . . . I obeyed M. Dupanloup, and I shall always do so henceforth. Still, I continue to confess, and as I have no longer M. B— I confess to M. Le Hir, to whom I am devotedly attached. I find that this improves and consoles me very much. I shall confess to you when you are ordained a priest.

[1] M. Cognat merely analyses the rest as follows:—"M. Renan then enters into some details with regard to preparing for his examination for admission into the Normal School, and for a literary degree. With regard to his bachelor's degree, the examination for which he has not yet passed, it does not cause him much concern. He had, however, great difficulty in passing, and only did so by producing a certificate of home study, much as he disliked having resort to this evasive course. He did not feel compelled to deprive himself of the benefit of a course which was made use of by every one else, and which seemed to be tolerated by the law of monopoly of university teaching in order to temper the odious nature of its privileges. 'But,' he goes on to say, 'I bear the university a grudge for having compelled me to tell a lie, and yet the director of the Normal School was extolling its liberal-mindedness.'"

However, out of condescension, as he said, for the opinion of others, M. Dupanloup was anxious that I should, before leaving the Stanislas College, go through a course of private prayer. At first, I was tempted to smile at this proposal, coming from him. But when he suggested that I should do this under the care of M. de Ravignan I took a different view of the proposal. I should have accepted, for this would have enabled me to bring my connection with Catholicism to a dignified close. Unfortunately, M. de Ravignan was not expected in Paris before the 10th of November, and in the meanwhile M. Dupanloup had ceased to be superior of the petty seminary and I had left the Stanislas College; the realization of this proposal seems to me adjourned for a long time to say the least of it.

Good-bye, my dear friend, and forgive me for having spoken only of myself. For your own as for your friend's sake, let me beg of you to take care of yourself during the period of convalescence and not to compromise your health again by getting to work too soon. I will not ask you to answer this unless you feel that you can do so without fatigue. The true answer will be when we can grasp hands. Till then, believe in my sincere friendship.

PARIS, *September 5th*, 1846.

I thank you, my dear friend, for your kind letter. It afforded me great pleasure and comfort during this dreary vacation which I am spending in the most painful isolation you can possibly conceive. There is not a human being to whom I can open my heart, nor, what is still worse, with whom I can indulge in conversations which, however commonplace, repose the mind and satisfy one's craving for company. One can be much more secluded in Paris than

in the midst of the desert, as I am now realizing for myself. Society does not consist in seeing one's fellow-men, but in holding with them some of those communications which remind one that one is not alone in the world. At times, when I happen to be mixed up in the crowds which fill our streets, I fancy that I am surrounded by trees walking. The effect is precisely the same. When I think of the perfect happiness which used to be my lot at this season of the year, a great sadness comes over me, especially when I remember that I have said an everlasting farewell to these blissful days. I don't know whether you are like me, but there is nothing more painful to me than to have to say, even in respect to the most trifling matter, "It is all over, for once and all." What must I suffer, then, when I have to say this of the only pleasures which in my heart I cared for? But what can be done? I do not repent anything, and the suffering induced in the cause of duty brings with it a joy far greater than those which may have been sacrificed to it. I thank God for having given me in you one who understands me so well that I have no need even to lay bare the state of my heart to him. Yes, it is one of my chief sorrows to think that the persons whose approbation would be the most precious to me must blame me and condemn me. Fortunately that will not prevent them from pitying and loving me.

I am not one of those who are constantly preaching tolerance to the orthodox; this is the cause of numberless sophisms for the superficial minds in both camps. It is unfair upon Catholicism to dress it up according to our modern ideas, in addition to which this can only be done by verbal concessions which denote bad faith or frivolity. All or nothing, the Neo-Catholics are the most foolish of any.

No, my dear friend, do not scruple to tell me that I am

in this state through my own fault; I feel sure that you must think so. It is of course painful for me to think that perhaps as much as half of the enlightened portion of humanity would tell me that I am hateful in the sight of God, and to use the old Christian phraseology, which is the true one, that if death overtook me, I should be immediately damned. This is terrible, and it used to make me tremble, for somehow or other the thought of death always seems to me very close at hand. But I have got hardened to it, and I can only wish to the orthodox a peace of mind equal to that which I enjoy. I may safely say that since I accomplished my sacrifice, amid outward sorrows greater than would be believed, and which, from perhaps a false feeling of delicacy, I have concealed from every one, I have tasted a peace which was unknown to me during periods of my life to all appearance more serene. You must not accept, my dear friend, certain generalities in regard to happiness which are very erroneous, and all of which assume that one cannot be happy except by consistency, and with a perfectly harmonized intellectual system. At this rate, no one would be happy, or only those whose limited intelligence could not rise to the conception of problems or of doubt. It is fortunately not so; and we owe our happiness to a piece of inconsistency, and to a certain turn of the wheel which causes us to take patiently what with another turn of the wheel would be absolute torture. I imagine that you must have felt this. There is a sort of inward debate going on within us with regard to happiness, and by it we are inevitably influenced in the way we take a certain thing; for there is no one who will deny that he contains within himself a thousand germs which might render him absolutely wretched. The question is whether he will allow them free course, or whether he will abstract

himself from them. We are only happy on the sly, my dear friend, but what is to be done? Happiness is not so sacred a thing that it should only be accepted when derived from perfect reason.

You will perhaps think it strange that, not believing in Christianity, I can feel so much at ease. This would be singular if I still had doubts, but if I must tell you the whole truth, I will confess that I have almost got beyond the doubting stage. Explain to me how you manage to believe. My dear friend, it is too late for me to exclaim to you. "Take care." If you were not what you are, I should throw myself at your feet, and implore of you to declare whether you felt that you could swear that you would not alter your views at any period of your existence. . . . Think what is involved in swearing as to one's future thoughts! . . . I am very sorry that our friend A——is definitely bound to the Church, for I feel sure that if he has not already doubted he will do so. We shall see in another twenty years. I hardly know what I am saying to you, but I cannot help wishing with St. Paul, that "all were such as I am," thankful that I have no need to add "except these bonds." With respect to the bonds which held me before, I do not regret them. Philosophy bids us say, *Dominus pars.*

When I was going up to the altar to receive the tonsure, I was already terribly exercised by doubt, but I was forced onward, and I was told that it was always well to obey. I went forward therefore, but God is my witness, that my inmost thought and the vow which I made to myself, was that I would take for my part the truth which is the hidden God, that I would devote myself to its research, renouncing all that is profane, or that is calculated to make us deviate

from the holy and divine goal to which nature calls us. This was my resolve, and an inward voice told me that I should never repent me of my promise. And I do not repent of it, my dear friend, and I am ever repeating the soothing words *Dominus pars*, and I believe that I am not less agreeable to God or faithful to my promise, than he who does not scruple to pronounce them with a vain heart, and a frivolous mind. They will never be a reproach to me until, prostituting my thought to vulgar objects, I devote my life to one of those gross and commonplace aims which suffice for the profane, and until I prefer gross and material pleasures to the sacred pursuit of the beautiful and the true. Until that time arrives, I shall recall with anything but regret the day on which I pronounced these words.

Man can never be sure enough of his thoughts to swear fidelity to such and such a system which for the time he regards as true. All that he can do is to devote himself to the service of the truth, whatever it may be, and dispose his heart to follow it wherever he believes that he can see it, at no matter how great a sacrifice.

I write you these lines in haste, and with my head full of the by no means agreeable work which I am doing for my examination, so you must excuse the want of order in my ideas. I shall expect a long letter from you which will have on me the effect of water on a thirsty land.

PARIS, *September* 11*th*, 1846.

I wish that I could comment on each line of your letter which I received an hour ago, and communicate the many different reflections which it awakens in me. But I am so hard at work that this is impossible. I cannot refrain, however, from committing to paper the principal points upon

which it is important that we should come to an immediate understanding.

It grieved me very much to read that there was henceforward a gulf fixed between your beliefs and mine. It is not so—we believe the same things; you in one form, I in another. The orthodox are too concrete, they set so much store by facts and by mere trifles. Remember the definition given of Christianity by the Proconsul (*ni fallor*) spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles, "Touching one Jesus, which was dead, and whom Paul declared to be alive." Be upon your guard against reducing the question to such paltry terms. Now I ask of you can the belief in any special fact, or rather the manner of appreciating and criticising this fact, affect a man's moral worth? Jesus was much more of a philosopher in this respect than the Church.

You will say that it is God's will we should believe these trifles, inasmuch as He had revealed them. My answer is, prove that this is so. I am not very partial to the method of proving one's case by objections. But you have not a proof which can stand the test of psychological or historical criticism. Jesus alone can stand it. But He is as much with me as with you. To be a Platonist is it necessary that one should adore Plato and believe in all he says?

I know of no writers more foolish than all your modern apologists; they have no elevation of mind, and there is not an atom of criticism in their heads. There are a few who have more perspicacity, but they do not face the question.

You will say to me, as I have heard it said in the seminary (it is characteristic of the seminary that this should be the invariable answer), "You must not judge the intrinsic value of evidence by the defective way in which it is offered. To say, 'We have not got vigorous men but we might have

them,' does not touch intrinsic truth." My answer to this is: 1st, good evidence, especially in historical critique, is always good, no matter in what form it may be adduced; 2nd, if the cause was really a good one, we should have better advocates to class among the orthodox:

1. The men of quick intelligence, not without a certain amount of finesse, but superficial. These can hold their own better; but orthodoxy repudiates their system of defence, so that we need not take them into account.

2. Men whose minds are debased, aged drivellers. They are strictly orthodox.

3. Those who believe only through the heart, like children, without going into all this network of apologetics. I am very fond of them, and from an ideal point of view I admire them; but as we are dealing with a question of critique they do not count. From the moral point of view, I should be one with them.

There are others who cannot be defined, who are unbelievers unknown to themselves. Incredulity enters into their principles, but they do not push these principles to their logical consequences. Others believe in a rhetorical way, because their favourite authors have held this opinion, which is a sort of classical and literary religion. They believe in Christianity as the Sophists of the decadence believed in paganism. I am sorry that I have not the time to complete this classification.

You mistrust individual reason when it endeavours to draw up a system of life. Very good, give me a better system, and I will believe in it. I follow up mine because I have not got a better one, and I often mutiny against it.

I am very indifferent with regard to the outward position in which all this will land me; I shall not attempt to give

myself any fixed place. If I happen to get placed, well and good. If I meet with any who share my views we shall make common cause; if not, I must go alone. I am very egotistical; left wholly to myself, I am quite indifferent to the views of other people. I hope to earn bread and cheese. The people who do not get to know me well class me as one of those with whom I have nothing in common; so much the worse, they will be all in the wrong.

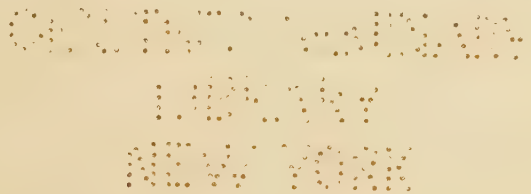
In order to gain influence one must rally to a flag and be dogmatic. So much the better for those who have the heart for it. I prefer to keep my thoughts to myself and to avoid saying the thing which is not.

If by one of those revulsions which have already occurred this way of putting things comes into favour, so much the better. People will rally to me, but I must decline to mix myself up with all this riffraff. I might have added another category to the classification I made just now: that of the people who look upon action as the most important thing of all, and treat Christianity as a means of action. They are men of commonplace intelligence compared to the thinker. The latter is the Jupiter Olympius, the spiritual man who is the judge of all things and who is judged of none. That the simple possess much that is true I can readily believe, but the shape in which they possess it cannot satisfy him whose reason is in proper proportion with his other faculties. This faculty eliminates, discusses, and refines, and it is impossible to quench it. I would only too gladly have done so if I could. With regard to the *cupio omnes fieri*, my ideas are as follows. I do not apply it to my liberty. One should, as far as possible, so place oneself as to be ready to 'bout ship when the wind of faith shifts. And it will shift in a lifetime! How often must

depend upon the length of that lifetime. Any kind of tie renders this more difficult. One shows more respect to truth by maintaining a position which enables one to say to her, "Take me whither thou wilt; I am ready to go." A priest cannot very well say this. He must be endowed with something more than courage to draw back. If, having gone so far, he does not become celestial, he is repulsive; and this is so true that I cannot instance a single good pattern of the kind, not even M. de Lamennais. He must therefore march ever onward, and bluntly declare, "I shall always see things in the same light as I have seen them, and I shall never see them in a different light." Would life be endurable for an hour if one had to say that?

With regard to the matter of M. A——, and putting all personal consideration upon one side, my syllogism is as follows. One must never swear to anything of which one is not absolutely sure. Now one is never sure of not modifying one's beliefs at some future time, however certain one may be of the present and of the past. Therefore . . . I, too, would have sworn at one time, and yet . . .

What you say of the antagonists of Christianity is very true. I have, as it happens, incidentally made some rather curious researches upon this point which, when completed, might form a somewhat interesting narrative entitled *History of Incredulity in Christianity.* The consequences would appear triumphant to the orthodox, and especially the first, viz., that Christianity has rarely been attacked hitherto except in the name of immorality and of the abject doctrines of materialism—by blackguards in so many words. This is a fact, and I am prepared to prove it. But it admits, I think, of an explanation. In those days, people were bound to believe in religions. It was the law at



that time, and those who did not believe placed themselves outside the general order. It is time that another order began. I believe too that it has begun, and the last generation in Germany furnished several admirable specimens of it: Kant, Herder, Jacobi, and even Goethe.

Forgive me for writing to you in this strain. But I do for you what I am not doing for those who are dearest to me in the world, to my sister, for instance, to whom I yesterday wrote less than half a page, so overburdened am I with work. I solace myself with the anticipation of the conversation which we shall have after my examination, for I mean to take a holiday then. There is, however, much that I should like to write to you about what you tell me of yourself. There, too, I should attempt to refute you, and with more show of being entitled to do so. Let me tell you that there are certain things the mere conception of which entails one's being called upon to realise them.

Good-bye, my very dear friend. . . . Believe in the sincerity of my affection.

THE END.

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